AN ANALYTICAL PROBE INTO THE GRAPHIC PRESENTATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE SURREALISTIC MONDO OF...

Mr. D.

written and illustrated by
JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO

PART ONE

DITKO- Steve- to comic book fandom is more or less a mysterious, legendary personality. The type of questions that usually arise from fans are; What is his background? What does he look like? Does he resemble any of the creatures he has created? What do his meals consist of? Are they fortified with vitamin M for mysticism? What kind of paper, pencils, ink, penpoints, brushes, erasers does he use? What we should be more interested in is what the artist is trying to say in his pictures in the form of line, texture, symbolism, and color. Have you ever asked yourself - why are his aliens, spaceships and futuristic people so unique? Why do they stand alone in the annals of imaginitive panel art?

Undoubtedly today's graphic master of mood, mystery, and mysticism, Ditko progressively through the years has strived to create a mature, intellectual graphic concept of adventurism on the cheapest material any graphic art form has ever been printed on - pulp paper. Ditko is one of a few artists (who can be counted on one hand) of modern comic book delineators that are not shackled by the pioneer adventure strip illustrators - those forefathers of illustrative panel art - Foster, Raymond and Hogarth. This man has taken the role of a god and within the ruled lines of the two dimensional comic page has created a wondrous world of uniqueness, bordered by a majestic aura in which the mature reader is beckoned, dared, and seduced into a higher plane of total escapism. In this world Ditko has broken away from tradition, eliminating much of the overactive backgrounds by using softer lines, tones and abstract forms, thus giving the figure or figures in the foreground a greater sense of depth, meaning, and characterization. He has invited the reader's natural imagination to PARTICIPATE (that is the key word), rather than making a definite statement in every panel with the reader being merely a spectator.

In a sense, it's much like old time radio versus color T.V. In the days of radio, you could visualize scenes of unequaled splendor in your mind's eye; whereas on modern day color T.V. many of the scenes are overcrowded, producing a mass of confusion. That, perhaps, makes the difference between a mature or adult graphic story presentation and that which is oriented towards a busy-scene audience. This audience is awed by overactive fine background lines, which at first are impressive and connote the draftmanship of the artist; but further study and impartial diagnosis reveal that it is a hindrance to the flowing continuity of the story and detracts from its main objective. The simplified forms advocated by Steve Ditko are perhaps more appealing in the long run. There is a greater stress for bold design and even a greater play of color. Much of his early work for Charlton revealed this. Whether or not he colored the panels in those early days is unknown, but it does seem as if he had a hand in using color to its fullest potential.

The use of solid color in various values and croma as a background to compliment the simplified line drawings is one of his fortes. This also holds true for much of his figure work. A beautiful example of this can be seen in MYSTERIES OF UNEXPLORED WORLDS # 3, 1957, story - "A Forgotten World." In just a few pages, Ditko has displayed the use of color to create various moods, leaving an impression upon your sensatory system. In most cases this would be an unconscious reaction on the reader's part. The red, orange, yellow, and magenta hit one's nerves and emit an air of intense excitement; on the other hand, green, blue, and violet have a more tranquilizing effect.

In his first works in the early fifties, Ditko displayed a definite indication of experimentation and the greatness that was to follow. We see marvelous circular stone staircases, beautifully textured; introduced are old withered witches endowed with fascinating hypnotic hand gestures never before seen by the impressionable comic book audience; a new interstellar world of futurism had been unveiled with spaceships as never before conceived, even by the greats of the E.C. line. Space adventurers' garb and interior of spacecraft one day would be mimiced by the nation's adult T.V. science-fiction program, STAR TREK. An interesting example can be found in SPACE ADVENTURES # 32, 1960.

Ditko is unmistakably a thinking man's artist. He has incorporated many of the innovations that you would normally find in fine art paintings. Inspired by the classic approach of cubism á la Picasso and the surrealistic sensationalism of Dali, united with design concepts of the orient - which are highly simplified and illustrated in an ageless and direct manner, his presentation is perhaps the utopia of continuity panel achievement.

to be continued

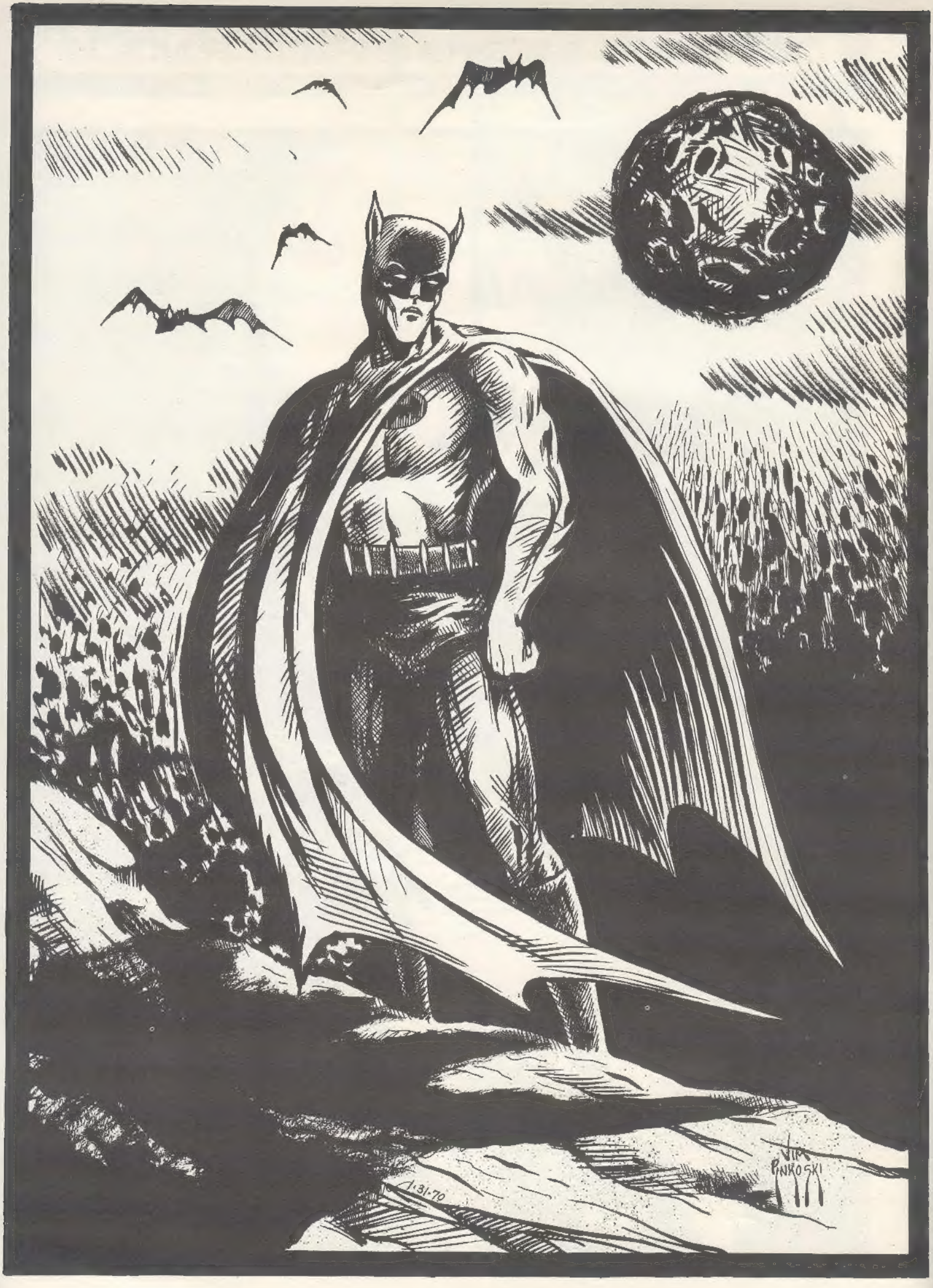
NOTICE TO FANDOM:

We are preparing a Ditko checklist and need your help. Send book title, month, year, and company to me, JGF, in care of Gary Groth. Also interested in buying books with Ditko stories and covers at reasonable prices. Do not send book - just information. Thank you, JGF.

1.00

THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN

PAINTED TO COMMEMORATE THE 100th ISSUE OF THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN - A TRIBUTE TO THE GENIUS OF LEE AND DITKO. ESPECIALLY DEPICTED FOR F F #13 BY FANDOM'S JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO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JIM PINKOSKI

Editorial Memo's

Gary Groth

The change this issue has been planned for many months now. I've been dropping hints about it in fandom for some time, and I hope no one's disappointed at "the big suprise" in FF 13. If you know me at all, you probably know the reason for this change in size and format. I felt that *I* was beginning to stagnate. I was turning out the same two-column layouts for 6 issues now; 243 pages! Since this is a hobby, I want to make it as exciting and *new* for *me* as I can; and consequently, for you, the reader. The larger page affords more room for experimentation, not to mention, the full page drawings will be just that much bigger. The only negative comment about this larger size was a storage problem; it'll stick out of a stack of "normal-sized" fanzines. But, I think we should concern ourselves more with the magazine, and the fact that it's good, or bad, or midline, rather than the size of it. If the product is creative, well-done, enjoyable and interesting, then a storage problem comes second. But this is only *my* opinion. And in *most* cases, I follow my readers' decision. This will be one of those cases, so please write in and tell me how you feel about the format change.

Even with the larger page size, and reduced type, I couldn't fit everything in this issue, that I had originally intended to put in. The Joe Sinnott Interview, the FF Control Satire, and one of Bill Cantey's short stories had to be cut. But, they'll all be here next issue.

As you may have noticed already, I was a little cramped for space, even when the above three features were cut. The '70 N.Y. Con photo spread is almost a year late, but I included it because I'm pretty sure most comic fans enjoy seeing pictures of their favorite pros; I know I do. While at the N.Y. Con last year, I was selling copies of FF, plus comics and posters. I'd like to thank all the great artists on FF's staff that let me sell some of their work at the con. This includes the work of Dave Cockrum, William Black and others. It just helped FF that much more, to help meet expenses on printing, and other publishing costs.

Last year's Metro Con was a real enjoyable fan event! Bill Cantey's report on the Metro Con covers it pretty well. I hope many of you can make it to this year's Metro Con. Last year's con ended late Sunday night; the following day, Berni Wrightson, Alan Weiss, and two local comic fans, Irene & Ellen Vartonoff accepted my invitation to come over to dinner. After dinner, Alan and Berni gave me pieces of artwork, both of which are printed in this issue. Berni's full page drawing (half-completed, with a half-toned background in order to bring out every detail) is a "self-rejected" splash page to his revoltingly funny, "Wrightson's Revolting Rhymes" in ABYSS # 1. And Alan, as many of you know, has become a fast-moving pro in the past year. Many thanks to both of you for those great drawings!

Jeffrey H. Wasserman, who will be the coordinator of next issue's big N.Y. Con Coverage, analyzes Conan this issue, from issue 1 to 7. The Sal Buscema drawing accompanying Jeffrey's article was the back cover to last year's Metro Con Program Booklet; but since it underwent such a great reduction, I thought a "reprint", in this case, would be acceptable. Also, Gary Kato, a fine Hawiian artist, debuts this issue, with a half-page S&S rendition on the last page of the Conan article.

Our pro-interview this issue with Howard Purcell, is one of the best interviews I've ever read. Thanks to Joe Mosca who conducted it for FF. Comments on the presentation of this interview, as compared to the previous issues interviews would be appreciated. All the fine half-tones cost money, so please let me know if you'd like to see this practice used in future interviews.

About the artists this issue: Mike Roberts has his first published work in FF this issue, as our inside back cover. An interview with Mike will appear in FF 15, after one or two full page renderings next issue. One of Dave Cockrum's finest drawings appears as our back cover this issue. Next issue's cover is, in my opinion, Dave's greatest piece of work: A wrap-around, black & white explosive rendition of the Silver Surfer in combat with the Vision! The Maxor drawing that appears opposite John's Pheonix Con report will appear in a much condensed version, in his S&S strip. And John Fantucchio -- I think all his work this issue speaks pretty much for itself. I'm sure everyone can see for themselves how much work John's put into this issue. John will be taking a "leave of absence" from fandom for about a year, starting this July. A few things by John will be appearing in fandom, but not too much. And all of John's work in this issue will certainly leave tremendous memories of John's fantastic talents.

Hope everyone enjoys this issue. As always, your letters of comment are appreciated and most welcome; so please write. This issue is dedicated to one of fandom's finest artists, and one of my best friends in fandom, John Fantucchio. John's helped me out more times than I can remember and has certainly been a great influence on my work in fandom. Thanks John, for all your great help!

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STAFF: Editor, publisher, typing & layout: Gary Groth. Writers: Contributed from readers. Staff Artists: Dave Cockrum, Robert Kline, John Fantucchio, Don Newton, John Adkins Richardson, Jim Pinkoski, William Black, Jay Mike, Al Grinage, Douglas Rice, John Cornell, Mike Roberts, Dennis Fujitake, Steve Hickman, Vincent Marchesano. Staff Writers: Tony Isabella, Dwight Decker, Gordon Matthews, Bill Cantey, Jim Wilson, Tom Crawford, Pat Janson, Duffy Vohland, Jeffrey H. Wasserman.

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CONAN

As man evolved from Apes, in such a way did pulps give birth to comics. From pulps, the comics borrowed much. Style, stories, and even characters themselves were to be found spreading across the pages of the new young industry. And with the "borrowing" of Tarzan, the Shadow, Ka-Zar and many others, there comes now another pulp hero from the past to brighten the unseen future. From the frozen wastelands of the far gone Cimmeria he comes, proudly proclaiming the coming of. . .

CONAN!
OF MARVEL

BY JEFFREY H. WASSERMAN

What with L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter unearthing the fabled legends of Conan, their ranks are now joined by another. By one who wishes to supplement to the history of the barbarian Amra rather than cataloging, and packaging his adventures in paperbacks. This new one has transformed the pulp hero of Robert E. Howard's into the comic book character of Roy Thomas'.

"To The Death!" reads Conan's word balloon on the cover of the first issue. The cover is a battlefield itself as Conan stands waiting the attack of his next opponent. At his feet lies his prize, a woman of goodly attributes. Such is the beginning of Conan the Barbarian! Whether this magazine is destined for success matters not. Thomas' and Smith's newest endeavor shall be remembered until time immortal.

"...until time immortal." Those are powerful words, but it shall not be so because of its bloodshed and vicious sword play. Its fame shall lie in the attempt made by Marvel to truly capture "pulp literature" in comics. For in the world of comics and the Comics Code, Sword & Sorcery can only exist by careful handling of the stories. With bloodshed, profanity and sex barred from comic periodicals, the amount of Sword & Sorcery stories that can be used is limited and their story plots can be severely hampered. To produce an S&S yarn, without some of its integral qualities is to risk disaster and degradation for and of this undertaking. But to put out a *successful* S&S magazine lacking these members is a masterpiece to be marveled at and one well worth remembering for a long time.

A flip of the page reveals the cast: Thomas, Smith and Adkins. I had hoped Barry to be inking his own work, especially because of that great job he did alone on a Conan-like story a few months ago*. That story was a sampling of what was to come and most probably, its overwhelming acceptance by fandom led Marvel into its decision to producing Conan The Barbarian.

The first issue saw Conan fighting the way I like him to, boldly, fiercely and unthinkingly. Young and yearning for adventure. Conan has sold his services to the Aesir. Pitted against winged furies and an ancient shaman, Conan is held captive by the elderly supernaturalist for sacrifice to the world of the "bat-winged devils." Conan smashes loose, destroys the old one's stone of power and runs from the ruins which are gutted with fire. Again, his prize is a woman. A woman who metamorphoses into one of the devils! Conan's thoughts drift to the sights of the future that the shaman had viewed, especially that of an older Conan being crowned king, as the story closed.

Barry Smith managed to capture the excitement of the battle and mysticism that played its way through Conan's first issue. Barry's artwork has indeed improved and it has now found its proper place. Dan Adkins did a good job of inking, but there are others who could do better. Roy Thomas' writing is a fairly good piece of "pulp literature" which could perhaps rival the Conan novels someday.

As the artwork in the second issue im-

* The story being referred to is, *"The Sword and the Sorcerers!"*. It appeared in Marvel Comics' Chamber of Darkness.

proves over that in the first, the artwork of the covers has depreciated. Conan # 1's cover revealed Conan as a warrior supreme, his muscles rippling and straining for action. Number 2's cover showed the Cimmerian without his mighty muscled frame. Along with this, the solitary word balloon on # 1's cover has swelled in size, this time with more drivel than before. Had there been any more space that could be covered up, Marvel would have done so with more balloons.

The second issue's splash page was a welcome sight indeed! Sal Buscema has helped Barry to raise Conan to even greater heights than before. Along with a new inker, a new colorer has joined the Conan staff. His use of many shades of blue and green set off Sal's inking fantastically!

The artwork does improve issue after issue and I'll hasten to admit this. Sal manages to bring out every thin line of facial expression, bodies, shadows, and backgrounds. This is really a superb job of inking!

The story itself, at first glance, led me to believe that it was an illustrated version of one of Howard's stories*. However, the woman, who was not as scantily dressed as the one in the short story led Conan to enslaving abominable snowmen rather than to frost giants. Even if it was an illustrated version of a Howard story, I would have welcomed it gladly; the artwork was that good.

Conan is lured by the fleeting girl into the ambush set by the intelligent apes and brought as a slave to their underground kingdom. It is there that Amra discovers other humans who willingly remain under the apes' bondage. Conan's strong will to escape and be free sets a heroic example for the enslaved masses, who rally to his aid and rebell against the ape-tyrant. And yet in victory, there is tragedy. The slaves find their leader dead. Killed by a cowardly blow from behind.

"For he was the *last* of the manlings --", but *first* among -- men!" proclaims Conan, as he crowns the dead leader king of the freemen.

In both issues of Conan, one thing has struck me as odd. The Comics Code states that, *"All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes ... shall not be permitted,"* but does that mean there can be NO BLOODSHED at all? It is highly unrealistic to see dead apes slaughtered by Conan, Conan smashed by spears, lions dying, and people knifed, without blood appearing! Not one solitary drop was to be seen! I don't ask for gushers and pools of blood, but merely bloodstained bodies and some traces of this body fluid where one would expect it. As fantastic a scene the second issue's splash page is, it is ridiculous to have a dead ape fully sprawled out for all to see that is without one cut or wound.

And it is this that I want to point out. With Marvel running Conan under the Comics Code, there can never be any equality between both illustrated and written versions of the barbarian. Marvel cannot give their magazine the savageness, swordplay, or overwhelming appeal that the literary original has. They can never portray any Conan story in an illustrated form without having to put some scenes off-panel or to rely upon "brilliancy lines."

Marvel's CONAN THE BARBARIAN can climb to frightening heights in the realm of comics, but never can it do so in the field of pulp classics. For Howard's Conan appeared first, and so shall it remain fixed in men's minds over Conan of Marvel. This fact and the existence of the present Comics Code shall result in Marvel's effort in being nothing more than a somewhat milder substitute. Never can it replace or take a rightful place alongside the literary Conan. This is the way it shall and *should* be.

* The story is Howard's, *"The Frost Giants Daughter"*, which appears in the second volume (according to plot sequence) of Lancer Books' Conan series. The volume is entitled: *"Conan of Cimmeria."*

CONAN POSTSCRIPT

JEFFREY H. WASSERMAN

Since the writing of "Conan Of Marvel", a great many events have occurred. Marvel's CONAN THE BARBARIAN has appeared several more times and has developed into a monthly publication. The youthful Cimmerian has also taken up residence in Marvel's new, *pulp-oriented* fifty-center, SAVAGE TALES.

The adaptation of "The Grey God Passes" casts Conan as a meaningless pawn in the deliverance of dead warriors' souls to their respective hereafters. As the Grim Grey God leads the souls of the brave to Nirvana, Conan helps a cowardly and treacherous traitor find *his* destiny by way of death. This story, unlike most of these in the Marvel series, emphasizes the barbarian's war career rather than his personal adventures.

One of the most truly magnificent of Howard's stories appears in issue four. "The Tower Of The Elephant". The edifice of a stranded space wanderer, last of the marooned group. Confined, tortured and shackled by he who was once friend, the galactic *elephant-man* sits within his bejewled and treasure-filled stronghold. The many fortunes to be had drive two adventurers to attempt entrance into the deadly lair of Yara, tormentor of the imprisoned one. Facing the multitudes of Death's tools, only one intruder survives. Conan!

He finds his way into the sky-reaching structure and comes upon the elephant. Trespasser and common robber becomes benefactor and deliverer. The elephant bids Conan to end his (the alien's) life and thereby free his soul from its agonized body. An interesting *deviation* from Howard's novelette occurs here. In the literary version, the elephants heart was to be placed on the spherical jewel. The Marvel version, bound the Comics Code Authority's restrictions, had the gem change to blood red by the mere fact that the alien was dead. Both comic and novel become as one again at this point. Bearing the rubied heart in hand, Conan presents it to Yara. The mighty sorcerer finds himself facing his persecuted victim within the jewel heart. A man anew, filled with the lust for vengeance, the elephant flies after Yara. Jewels dissapate and the tower collapses as Conan is once more an observing pawn of another.

Issue five of CONAN THE BARBARIAN tells of a kindly old conjurer whose daughter, a catty type, has a part time job as local tax collector. The local peasantry, enraged by the prospect of having to fill out new 1040 Forms with higher tax rates, enlist the aid of a mercenary. They send this personage (need I tell you his name?) as their tax specialist to consult with the elderly prestidigitator about his new tax tables. Finding his daughter in the arms of Conan, father confronts barbarian with demonic spells, netherworld spirits and bewitching dependent. Both hastily depart, leaving Conan with "Income other than wages, dividends and interest." All this (and admittedly more) from Robert E. Howard's poem, "Zukala's Hour."

Seriously now.

The first two stories discussed are almost exact adaptations in the cases of plot and script. *Precious* little writing and *absolutely* no plotting had to be employed in the conversions from written to illustrated form. Progressive has been the quality of the art. Issue three was better than issue two, and issue four, better than issue three. Indeed, issue four represented the perfect artwork and mastering for and of the Sword & Sorcery visual novel.

The inking of Frank Giacoia is rough and crude in comparison to the delicate, fine inking of Conan in the past by Sal Buscema. Over the space of one month, Giacoia managed to age Conan into a *middle-aged* man. His face and features, in particular lost their youthful appearance and became heavy and darkened. If there is anything that can weaken a young strip such as Conan, it is the constant switching around of a vital constituent. Especially when drastic changes take place. Surely, and hopefully, Marvel will realize this and keep a steady inker on Barry Smith's Conan pencils.

Thomas' writing in "Zukala's Daughter" contained many abrupt stops and go's in the action. As the wizard lies at the mercy of Conan, his daughter hastens to attack the dark-haired northerner and then decides against it. Whereupon the netherworld spirit appears. Hurling aside the sorcerer's tigress-daughter, the ghoul faces the axe-wielding Cimmerian. The outsider vanishes at the bidding of the warlock, and then he too, with child in arms, follows suit. The denouement of the issue leaves the readers with a somewhat *sour taste* in their mouths. For as Zukala's image fades into nothingness, he tells the young warrior to, "Beware!" "Beware," of what? Could it be that a time would come to pass when barbarian and magician would meet again? That they would face each other in a manner similar to how Doctor Doom makes regular visits to the FANTASTIC FOUR magazine. One wonders how low Marvel would stoop.

Once more, I found Conan chasing a "fleeting girl". This time the woman was "as scantily dressed as the one in the novel," leaving no doubt in my mind that this truly was "The Frost Giants Daughter". As in the previous Marvel Comics' adaptations, both story-line and dialogue followed the literary version.

Ere I had finished perusing Barry Smith's work in SAVAGE TALES, I realized that fantastic artwork such as this had never appeared before in black and white comics. At least not since VAMPIRELLA # 9 which contained "The Boy Who Loved Trees." Barry illoed this story and along with Gardner Fox, wrote it. Whereas Smith's previous non-color labor lacked any shadings of gray (leaving it look like an inked pencilling), CONAN THE BARBARIAN contained varying tones of black and white. His employing of dark and light, and shades thereof, gave a certain quality and texture to the drawings. They were developed from cold, sharp ink ren-

derings by the usage of finely shadowed mists that drifted over facial and body contours and clung to what little apparel was worn. A great deal of *zip-a-tone* (those itty-bitty dots of varying shapes).

"The Wings Over Shadizar" was the "landmark story", in issue 6, that removed the disaster that rested on Conan's head for the past 5 issues; his twin-horned helmet. In a scene that Robert Wagner and Raquel Welch could've done wonders with, Conan's horned helmet finally succumbs to the soothing hands of a woman, while in the last five issues, it withstood the swords and sorcery of countless warriors and warlocks. Also in this issue, thanks to the revisions of the Comics Code Authority, we see Conan with a bloody nose; and unlike bloody noses in comics before, this one is *bloody*. And somehow, it doesn't come across as well as would be expected.

Clouted on the head five panels after his helmet is taken off, he is knocked unconscious, and Jenna, the beautiful "wench" in this month's story, is taken captive by the men of Shadizar. Learning she is being held captive from Jenna's uncle, Conan steals his way into a mammoth minaret, a towering structure that stands over the city of Zamora, a building that holds the city in fear. Jenna, is shackled to a table, and Conan is too late to save her from the clutches of the mysterious, time-forgotten, "Night-God"; a giant bat. The bat already has Jenna in its claws, when Conan grabs the object nearest him, and leaps on the creature's back, flailing an iron-cast torch. He manages to ground the beast. Waking up a second time, he realizes that the goodbye kiss he received from Jenna hours before, was not meant only for him; all his gold vanished, along with Jenna.

The coloring, though superior in all the Conan books, stands out in this issue, and supplements Barry Smith's dynamic flair for fine art. Sal Buscema has returned this issue, and with him, some of the best inking comics have been endowed with.

Following one of Conan's worst splash pages, Marvel's Conan # 7 turns out to be one of the best issues yet! (Incidentally, with the exception of issues 2 and 7, the splash pages of the Conan books have, strangely enough, been the low-point, art-wise, for me). Saving Lady Aztrias, niece of the governor of Numalia from a wolf-pack, earns Conan the "honor" of being the Lady's new charriot driver. The story of "The Great Bowl" is revealed to Conan from Lady Aztrias. The Great Bowl was delivered to Karanthes of Hanumarm, priest of the God-Bird Ibis, as a gift. It is believed to contain treasures beyond compare. That night, Conan was to steal the Bowl -- *for* Lady Aztrias -- though I'm sure he had other ideas.

Conan works his way into The House Of Relics in a one-page masterpiece-sequence by Barry Smith, on page 7; he finds the guard dead. Conan is quickly abducted by a nightwatch, and is soon surrounded by the city guard. Lady Aztrias walks in and denies ever telling Conan to steal the bowl. Conan's rage is short-lived, as Arus, the night watchman, crawls weakly, from the adjacent room. Walking into the same room that Arus just left, the only thing Conan & Co. find is a bust of a serpent's head. One of the trigger-happy guards fires a cross-bow shaft directly under the serpent's head, bringing the coiling creature suddenly to life! Wrapping around Lady Aztrias, the closest person to "it", the chief inquisitor and Conan are the only one's that remain in the room; the rest flee in terror. The writhing serpent quickly subdues the courageous blonde warrior [Demetrio, chief inquisitor], leaving only Conan to face it. Leaping into battle, Conan fights fiercely with the thing, finally battering its face into tattered ruins, defeating the monster that just seconds before, held Conan in a death-grip.

The grand finale is the huge head of THOS-AMON, the most feared of Stygian Wizards who emerges in a cloud of smoke, from the golden bowl. "And now, at last, the full horror of it all rushes over Conan... ... and he flees..."

Barry Smith has demonstrated once again that he is one of the comics' greatest story-tellers. His panels, especially in this and the fourth issue, have more fluency than most in comics being published today. He's combined the fine art with the exciting story-telling techniques most characterized by Steranko's superb comic book work.

Running parallel to the literary series, Conan's success is imminent. Illustrating many of Howard's stories can afford the magazine with the same readers that buy the paperbacks. Publishing "licensed" comic magazines could bring fandom's favorite fantasy characters to Marvel, and in turn, bring much needed money to the outfit. Imagine Marvel picking up Doc Savage, or the Shadow, and maybe even REH's Brak Mak Morn!

The 1970 Comic Art Convention took place at the New York Statler Hilton Hotel over the July Fourth week-end [July 3rd, 4th and 5th]. Over 1900 comic fans converged at the Pen Top Room at the Hilton for this, the biggest comicon ever! Professional comic writers, editors and artists attended. The program was filled with panel discussions, slide shows, film showings, auctions, a Luncheon, and other special events, not to mention the huge exhibit room, housing the works of Gray Morrow, Jim Steranko and Neal Adams, the two enormous dealer rooms, and the rapping with old friends. Some of the pros that attended the con were Al Williamson, Frank Frazetta, Gil Kane, Neal Adams, Tom Sutton, Kenneth Smith, Mike Friedrich, Al Weiss, Roy Thomas, Bill Everett, Joe Kubert, Joe Sinnott, Ken Kelley, Robert Kline, Wally Wood, Dave Cockrum, Roy G. Krenkel, Neal Adams, Dick Giordano, Nicola Cuti, Jim Warren, Vaughn Bode', Berni Wrightson, Gray Morrow, Mike Kaluta, Murphy Anderson, John Buscema and Stan Lee! Some line-up of professional guests, heh? This issue of FF is too late to give a lengthy report on the con activities [Next issue will have an in-depth report] but it's said a picture is worth a thousand words... So, start "reading" . . .

TOP: Neal Adams gives Keynote Speech at beginning of con. After Dick Giordano introduced Adams to the jam-packed auditorium of anxious fans, Neal began his talk. He spoke frankly and articulately on the change of comics; from the famed EC's, to today's comics, which Neal feels are "coming of age" at long last. After his talk, Neal fielded questions from the audience. Twenty-two questions later, Neal drew to a close, what was one of the finest panels of the con.

BOTTOM: From left to right, Frank Jacobs, Dave Berg, Jerry [illegible], Jo[illegible] Putnam. All MAD staffers. This was taken after the Mad slide show came to a close. Between the kibitzing, John Putnam moderated this in an excellent!

LEFT: Roy G. Krenkel takes a breather from the hustle and bustle of the activity.

BOTTOM: Phil Seuling starts the con off.

A PICTORIAL REPORT ON...

GIL KANE is always willing to take time out and give fans his opinion, and give suggestions and tips to improve their art.

ROY THOMAS and his beautiful wife, Jean, pose for this snap. JEAN: "You can have your ALTER-EGO! Just give me back my copy of FANTASTIC FANZINE!"

the '70 N.Y. Comicon!

PANEL: The Direction of Comics in the 1970's. From left to right, Johnny Romita, Denny O'Neil, Roy Thomas, Dick Giordano, Gray Morrow, Archie Goodwin, Neal Adams, Jim Warren. As the name suggests, this panel delved into the future of comics. Moderator, Dick Giordano stated that if comics don't change he won't be in the business five years from now. Neal Adams was most vehement about changing the comic books into adult, graphic masterpieces. Publisher, Jim Warren argued with Adams, saying, "I'm with you Neal," and continued, "BUT - you're going to walk into a publisher's office with your beautiful stories and strips, and they're going to say, 'They're nice...but WILL THEY SELL??'"

TOP WARREN ARTIST, Ken Kelley patiently rummages through his portfolio. Ken & his beautiful wife were two of the friendliest people I met at the con.

WALLY WOOD talks freely to some of his many fans. Currently, Wally is reported working on a new book for Warren.

TOP: Berni Wrightson behind the Abyss table. BOTTOM: Jim Steranko appears as though he's drinking water.

TOP: Joe Sinnott, whose interview will appear in next issue. BOTTOM: Dave Cockrum does sketches for one of his many fans.

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN VEST

TOMBSTONES

by Bill Cantey

Tork was at it again. The misshapen dwarf was forcing the queen bee of the saloon floozies to dance naked on the bar, while he flayed her with a small whip that he carried for that purpose. Although women were scarce this far west, and none of the men present would normally allow one to be mistreated, no one broke up the fiendish runt's play or even voiced an objection. Not even the brawny barkeep dared to interfere by moving toward his shotgun under the bar. For the weak, weaponless Tork was the pet of Vince Colby, the man in the golden vest.

Colby sat, calmly regarding the scene, bemused at Tork's antics as the unfortunate female was chased screaming nude up the rickety stairs to disappear behind a slammed door, with the guffawing dwarf giving her a departing shot before returning to his master's side. Tork was a card, no doubt about that. Years of being scorned by women had vested the unpopular cripple with a hatred for the opposite sex that could not be satisfied. But he'd keep working at it.

Colby's pale hands were manipulating cards in a game of solitaire with a dexterity and speed that the normal eye could not follow. And it was this same speed that held the roomful of armed men at bay while Tork had enjoyed his sport. Once a saloon flunky and a general handy man, Tork did indeed enjoy his newly aquired status as the town's second citizen.

The first citizen had arrived only two weeks and three days ago. When this slightly built, dark haired man with his pale complexion and piercing blue eyes got off the stage, he was immediately spotted as a professional gambler. The local law, a sheriff and one deputy, gave him twenty-four hours to move on; with no gambling to be done in the meantime. The next morning he stepped out, wearing a thirty-eight Colt Lightning and a gold-colored silk vest, embroidered with genuine gold wire. His boots were decorated with gold studs. His cuff links were tiny golden skulls. Even his double-action revolver was gold plated. He killed the sheriff and deputy in a single shoot-out. No one had braced him after that.

So the town was his. After a week of basking in his glory, he'd elevated Tork to the position of his valet and second in command. Tork took to it like a duck

and provided the gambler with more sport than he'd thought the small frontier community could provide. But now he was bored, ready to leave town. The previous night, he'd ordered Tork to round up the town's leading citizens for a game of no-limit poker. He smiled at the memory. He'd cheated shamelessly, obviously. And they'd all been too frightened to complain. Then he'd won the biggest pot with *five* aces, and still no one had spoken up. Now he had most of the town's money; and he'd had the town. He was ready to move on. But it had to be done just right. He couldn't simply board the morning stage. His departure had to be done with finesse. A gunfight would suffice; but who? He had the whole town treed; no one would dare stand up to him. He was trying to decide whether to burn down the church or the schoolhouse, when the newcomer arrived.

He was lean, but powerfully built, this young stranger. The kind of man who might be used to holding his own and standing up for himself. He was hatless, and being blond had paid the price. His tanned face was freshly sunburned to a rosy hue across the tip of his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. His wiry, blond hair curled forward at either temple above watchful blue eyes. His red shirt was covered with trail dust so that its faded pinkness matched his newly altered complexion. His pants and boots were too dusty to have their color identified, but the gambler's attention stopped at the young stranger's waist. A pair of heavy, single-action forty-fives depended from two, crossed shellbelts. This then, was his finale. His triumphant exit from this dirty little pesthole of a town. Colby shot the cards in a shower toward the cuspidor and approached his living, dead man.

It hadn't turned out exactly as the gambler had planned. His insistance that the young stranger indulge in straight whisky was naturally refused, since the dust-covered kid had obviously been riding hard without food for days. When Colby attempted to throw the refused drink into the young man's face, his world exploded. The glass spun from his hand, and a rock-hard fist smashed into his jaw, sending him sprawling. But the wryly gambler had kept his wits. He'd not drawn. It would have been foolish to draw, flat on his back, under another man's gun. Besides, his working vest was up in his room; this one was only silk. So, he'd simply gotten up and made an appointment for sun-up the next morning. He'd make his kill, and board the stage in triumph. The salty taste of blood in his mouth, tonight, would be replaced by the sweet taste of revenge tomorrow morning. He slept with the joyful anticipation of a child on Christmas Eve.

It was a beautiful morning for it. Colby stood on the wooden sidewalk in full regalia. He felt safe and confident inside his golden shield. Not that there was any chance of that nameless drifter getting in the first shot. But some of these bumpkins were stubborn about dying. The steel plates inside his vest would decrease the possibility of a fatal hit from a dying man's parting shot. Good crowd; nice turnout.

The stage was scheduled to pull out at first light, but it'd wait for him. The driver valued his life. Besides, the passengers wanted to see the sport. Tork was standing by to leave with him. He'd have to. Colby would drop him in the next town; he was just as bored with the demented dwarf as he was with the town.

If that saddle bum didn't show up soon, he'd have to send Tork into the hotel to rout him out. He fingered the two derringers in the vest's pockets. Four-shot pepperboxes, altered to fire all four barrels at once, like miniature shotguns.

A murmur in the crowd turned his attention from the hotel to the livery stable. The young fool had led his horse from the building, tied him at the hitchrail, and was walking in his direction. Having made it to the stable, he could've slipped out of town and saved his worthless life. Why hadn't he? Colby was a little less cocky as he stepped into the street and walked to meet his intended victim.

The stranger had replaced his lost hat with a new, white stetson. His clothing was now free from dust, and he'd donned a calfskin vest. Its black and white patterns contrasted sharply in the early morning sunlight.

Colby stopped and held his ground; he didn't want to be walking when he drew.

The slender, young figure moved closer. His gunbelts and boots had been cleaned, and polished. The grips of his two, heavy revolvers had been dull grey-black yesterday. Now they caught the sun's rays like tiny mirrors. The handles of the Colts were of polished silver.

Initially, Colby was pleased that this young pup had shown some flair. But the silver handled Colts stirred an uneasy memory. He recollected stories of a six-gun wizard, an outlaw who carried such weapons. The suddenly powerful form was within range and still, casually, approaching.

The sweating gambler clawed at his Colt. A jarring blow numbed his arm and spun him half-way around. He fell on his back, his unfired gun lay several yards away. At first Colby thought that someone in the crowd had thrown something at him. But a glance at his ruined right arm, revealed that he had indeed been struck by a heavy slug. The bullet entered the top of his wrist, plowed the length of his forearm, then destroyed his elbow. With the loss of that limb, his easy life as a gambler-gunfighter was ended. But he'd kill the man who crippled him! Rolling on his stomach, he left-handed one of the derringers and thrust it forward. Before he could cock the tiny hammer, the stranger's heavy weapon exploded again. The large caliber slug entered the neck of the vest, blazed a trail of agony along his spine, then tore away his manhood as it exited. Excrutiating pain occupied his entire being. He was roughly turned on his back, the remaining derringer was taken from his vest, and both were thrown out of reach. An unnecessary precaution; Colby was paralyzed. He could only move his head. He tried to call Tork. But the now, unprotected dwarf was being drowned in a horse trough by the reinstated town bully. The stage lurched and rolled away, like life leaving him behind. His last sight on earth was the young gunfighter on a steel-grey stallion, riding out of town and into the living world of western legend that he was leaving forever.

Western sketch by JOHN FANTUCCHIO

—INTERMISSION—
WITH BILL CANTEY

[Editor's Note: This interview with Bill Cantey, the exciting story-teller that has written around such characters as Ka-Zar, the Sub-Mariner, Spider-Man, and many others, will hopefully give you insight to Bill Cantey, the person. I've known Bill for at least two years now, and in that time, he's been both a good friend, and a good staff member; always a pleasure to work with. FF will continue to publish Bill's terrific short stories as long as Bill will write them for us. My only regret is that I wasn't able to print Bill's story, "The Hole In The Universe" in this issue; it'll definitely appear in the next ish, but for now, enjoy this feature:]

When did you first become interested in fandom and fanzines and how did you discover them?

In 1967, I was finishing a correspondence course in cartooning. My appreciation for good cartooning increased as I painfully attempted the third and final phase of the course. My ultimate plan at the time was to eventually try my skill at creating one-panel jokes for various magazines. I was having some trouble with backgrounds so I checked the current crop of comic books to see if there was anything I could swipe --I mean-- learn. The Marvel mags caught my eye and I got interested in comics again after an abstinence of over ten years. I investigated some of the ads, started getting THE ROCKET'S BLAST and got hooked. Oh yeah, I finished the course, but never did anything with it. I'd advise anyone who's contemplating such a move to either enter an actual school with real classes, or just buy some books on the subject. If you've got enough drive to finish a correspondence course, you'll do just as well as a self-taught student. And fandom is the greatest place in the world for *free* criticism.

What was the first fanzine to feature your work, and how was it that this was the first fanzine you discovered and decided to work for?

That would be the old YANCY STREET GAZETTE. They got my address out of Marvel's letters section and invited me to join the "Gang". They printed my first fan fiction, a one page "Hulk" story with an assist from Steve Ziegler.

Up to now, what fanzines have featured your work?

Mostly the FANTASTIC FANZINE, thanks to your interest and encouragement. Mark Wheatley's NUCLEUS has published a story and an article. He's holding some other work which will appear in future issues. Mark calls me his head-writer, because I once sent him an article written on paper towels. Dwight Decker printed the *first* story that I ever wrote in his TRUE FAN ADVENTURE THEATRE. It was an effort at humor before I became fan orientated. Bill Wilson of THE COLLECTOR is planning to print an article of mine in his next publication, # 23. And Jim Stewart has promised to feature two articles in his upcoming NEBULOUS. Art-wise, MARVELMANIA accepted my club insignia design, and ERB-dom recently printed my first one-panel joke.

Who do you consider to be the best fan writer?

I'm a Dwight Decker desciple. Ol' Dwight reminds me of the ex-convict who'd spent five years in solitary confinement. He could run a three minute mile, but he ran it in a six-foot circle. If they can ever straighten him out, he'll be one heck of a miler. However, I'm confident that Decker will straighten out, and be a future pro. The fan-appeal of Dwight's work is evident; when he finds the right direction for himself and the general reading public, he'll start selling. And we can say we knew him when he was just another self-centered member of fandom. No! I'm just kidding. Some fans might feel that Dwight is something of an egotist; but I've had some correspondence with him and found him to be a likeable fellow with a keen sense of humor. In fact, when I submitted some work for publication in his TRUE F.A.T., he was quite cordial. Replying promptly and in a neatly typed letter, he saith unto me, that whatsoever I should sendath unto him he would by no means cast it out. A little strange, but a heck of a talent.

As a side note, there was a story called "Tales Of The Nightwalker" in GOSH-WOW # 2 with spot illustrations by John Fantucchio that I found slightly terrific. But, I don't know if the writer, Larry Brody, did any more work for fandom. If he did, and they're as good as "Night walker", he just might be the best. And finally, I think the best fan fiction to appear in the FANTASTIC FANZINE was Dave Cockrum's "Ayesha" in issue 8*9. Since it wasn't comic-oriented, it might not have received the attention it deserved. But it was good by any standards.

Outside of comic-fandom, Jan Strnad is another fine fan writer. His 'zine, ANOMALY, is devoted to Fantasy-Adventure and Science Fiction.

Who's your favorite fan artist?

Robert Kline, master of the fine line. And I told you that *before* he flattered one of my inept stories with one of his excellent illustrations. Incidentally, the original of Kline's Ka-Zar drawing now hangs, professionally framed, in my home; and gets quite a reaction from non-fan visitors.

Next, I favor the electrifying style of John Fantucchio's paintings. Dave Cockrum and Richard Corben are two other favorites. But I think all four are pros now; or at least semi-pros. So, I'll choose a second string just in case the first selections no longer qualify: Don Newton, Jim Jones, and Dave Russell.

With two others, worthy of mention: Jay Mike and Al Grinage.

Currently, which fanzines, in your opinion, are the best art-wise?

WITZEND, or maybe PARAGON. WITZEND has wasted an awful lot of space on some pretty primitive stuff, and William Black's work is beautiful; I'm sure he's a pro. But, I think that WITZEND is my first choice. Wallace Wood's 'zine introduced two highly impressionable characters; Animan and Mr. "A"

Text-wise?

GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE is the publication to beat. I also subscribe to CARTOONIST PROfiles. Both are excellent publications, and although I'm not always interested in *everything* they print; they are, I think, the best.

If I were an E.C. addict with a complete or near-complete collection, I'd be enraptured by SQUA TRONT and SPA FON.

GOSH-WOW, ALTER EGO, MARVELMANIA, and COMICKAZI should also receive honorable mentions. But, they're so many beautiful 'zines (pro and fan) that it's pretty much a matter of preference when you consider the top contenders. Among which the FANTASTIC FANZINE rates highly.

Just what is it that you look for in a fanzine? What is it that appeals to you most in a 'zine?

I look for looks. If a 'zine's ad looks good, I'll risk sending for it. Then if the 'zine itself is well laid out with neatly typed and printed articles (or stories) with *related* illustrations, I count it a winner. Now, if the writing is extremely bad, the effect is wasted. But, it's unusual for an editor to go to the trouble and expense of publishing really poor material in a luxurious format.

Do you get many requests for articles and stories from 'zine editors?

Not a lot. Once in a while, I'll get a letter from an editor I never heard of. At first, I tried to oblige everyone, but after a second would-be editor failed to go to press, or return the requested article, I decided to bend my efforts in more trustworthy directions, meaning the FF and comparative publishers. I usually answer requests, but the answer's usually negative, since I'm just writing myself out of a common fan-writer's bind, promising too much to too many. And it's getting to be *work*.

What, in your opinion, is the best all-time fanzine ever published, considering art, text, layout, et cetera?

Any fan favors the 'zine with which he's associated. So I should continue to exclude the FANTASTIC FANZINE from our discussion and make another selection. But, I won't. FANTASTIC FANZINE # 12 was the fanzine that I've enjoyed the most. It featured my favorite fanzine artist and favorite fan-writer. And since it contained no material by me, I feel that I may be forgiven for expounding on my "home" fanzine.

When and where were you born?

At 60-A Cannon Street, Charleston, South Carolina; August 24, 1936. That makes me thirty-four, but my mental age is closer to fifteen, so maybe I can still be trusted. Incidentally, this was in the old days when doctors made house-calls. Right. The ol' Doc just stopped by one day and --uh-- helped me out, so to speak.

Oh, and I've been married for about four years; maybe five by the time this is printed.

What do you think of today's comics as compared to those of the Golden Age and EC's?

The early beginning of comic books was exciting. I still like to read about how they came into existence and evolved into the present form. When Marvel or National offers a reprint of a comic story from the early forties, I always buy it (and occasionally remember it). Place the Golden Age reprint (or original) beside today's best, and the superiority of the current crop, artwise, is readily apparent. The old style story was great in its day, and still has nostalgic value and interest. But, I can't imagine it succeeding now.

The E.C. era, I vividly recall. Entertaining Comics came into being as I entered my mid-teens. And probably when I would've lost interest in the comic book as entertainment. But, the quality of the E.C. was so obvious that they weren't even considered with their fellow publications. In other words, you'd have been laughed at for reading a common comic book, but an E.C. was something else; it was socially accepted by an extremely critical age group. Of course, E.C.'s also attracted the wrong kind of attention. Reformers attacked them on a national scale, driving them to the wall in a classic example of chasing a mouse with lions loose in the house. Enter the code, and exit what might have been the most communicative form of visual entertainment that has ever existed.

The very best, I hope, is yet to come.

Are there any fields besides comics that particularly interest you?

Science fiction and heroic-fantasy are my life's blood. Reading is my main interest, and mainly I read fantasy-adventure stories and novels. Usually the old, pre-forties stuff, and reprints of the best pulps in paperback form.

Movies were another mainstay from my youth, and I love to catch a well remembered film from the late forties or early fifties on television. And I still have a passion for sending for things. A hangover from the old time radio days, with its by-products of adventure, rings and things of brass and glass.

Probably, my present interest in comics is mostly nostalgic. We had three distinct forms of entertainment; comics, radio, and movies. Today's television is a conglomeration of all three. And maybe it's my age talking, but T.V. is just -- too easy. The weekly motion picture with its side dishes of cartoons and serials was a big deal, but now -- it's routine. It takes a supreme effort of self-discipline to limit one's T.V. watching to the things that really interest him.

Have you ever given any thought to going pro in the writing field, whether it would be pulp literature, comics, or whatever?

No. It'd be much too difficult. I've got "word blindness", Can't spell, and I have to be drilled on unfamiliar words before I can pronounce them correctly. Also, my recollection of the rules of grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation is very vague. If I wanted to become a writer, I'd literally have to go back to school. I'm flattered that you asked, but even with my overactive imagination, I can't imagine that I'll ever sell a story or even a story idea. Conversely, writing (after reading) is my favorite pastime. I love to make up stories; can't help it in fact.

The pulp era has passed, and reprints of past triumphs as well as current efforts in the genre have pretty much saturated the market. So, there's not much chance for even a *talented* newcomer to break into the field. Still, the pinnacle of success for me would be to create a character that would stand beside the best known fiction heroes that came out of that time. Tarzan, Doc Savage, and Sherlocke Holmes, being notable examples.

Are there any writers in the pro field who have influenced your work?

Nothing I've written, with the exception of some humor, would stand up outside of fandom. Edgar Rice Burroughs is my most read author. Robert E. Howard is another favorite. I'd be very pleased if someone told me that something I wrote reminded him of either.

What kind of comics do you collect?

Basically, I'm a fan of the artist and/or writer. Not the publishing companies, the magazines, or even the characters. I do have a lot of Marvels, and a good supply of Nationals. I have only a few pre-Code comics, recently purchased. I was a simple enjoyer, not a collector, in my early years. *Simple* is the word; the comics that I could have bought for a dime once, are collector's items today. But I traded away, gave away, and finally *threw* away several hordes of comics. But, how was I to know that I'd fall victim to the fine madness called comic-fandom?

Currently, who is your favorite pro artist?

Jim Steranko; although I'm quite aware of other great talents in the business. Nor do I begrudge Jack Kirby his honorary title of "King". His startling style is the essence of the super-hero concept, which is in turn the soul of the comic book industry. Other favorites: Wallace Wood, Neal Adams, Berni Wrightson, Jack Davis, Steve Ditko, and the Buscema brothers. Oh, and that fellow who "graduated" from comic books, Frank Frazetta.

I wish they'd all end up working for SUPERGRAPHICS.

And who's your favorite pro writer?

In comics, the artists who also do their own writing and do it well. The graphic creator is an exceptionally talented human being. Good examples are the aforementioned Jim Steranko, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, and Wallace Wood.

Outside of comics, I'll vote for the "terrific prolific" of Edgar Rice Burroughs; then jump ahead a few decades to name a fairly new author as my second favorite. John Norman, the careful chronologist of the Counter-Earth series, has managed to combine the appeal of Sword & Sorcery with an epic adventure relating to the values and attitudes of today. And if I may insert a plug here, an interview with Mr. Norman is scheduled to appear in my "home" away from "home", NUCLEUS.

Other writers that I watch for are Ted White, Fritz Leiber, John Jakes, Lin Carter, and the already mentioned Robert E. Howard.

How's your working speed? Could you tell us approximately how long it took you to finish your two latest stories, "The Golden Vest" and "The Hole In The Universe" [to be printed next issue]?

I dream up stories fast, but get 'em down on paper slow. First I write the story completely -- in my head. Then I scribble it down on paper as fast as I can. I rough-type it (double space) as soon as I can, least it get "cold" and even *I* can't read it. A few days later, I'll re-read it, correct the spelling, change some sentence structure, and retype it as well as I can. I don't write every day, so actual time spent on a story varies. Incidentally, I don't think of them as stories, but "story ideas". Anyway, I spent a total of about twelve hours on "The Golden Vest", and twice that on "The Hole In The Universe."

Right now, what, in your opinion is the best all-around company producing comics?

When Marvel lost Kirby, National gained an obvious advantage. Further, National has really found the handle with the Neal Adams BATMAN. But, Marvel's not finished yet. Currently, my two favorite comic characters (Conan & Ka-Zar) are Marvel's. Wood and Wrightson could do wonders with either. National has always had the edge on Marvel in the war and westerns department, in spite of the fact that Kid Colt is a well remembered favorite of my youth, and that John Severin is one of the best straight-adventure artists in the business. But all things considered, I'll cast my vote for National. If Marvel had allowed men like Kirby, Steranko, Ditko, Wood, and Severin to edit as well as draw and write, they'd have the most creative line of comics that have ever existed. But in all fairness, that's a dream-wish, and might have been a disastrous experiment. Fan approval is rarely an indication of financial success; it's more likely the kiss of death.

What, in your opinion, was the best all-time strip ever published?

I'm glad you keep saying, "opinion", because I don't feel qualified to make such a judgement. I'm not an expert. Alex Raymond's FLASH GORDON eventually had *everything*. Hal Foster's PRINCE VALIANT is an epic never to be equaled, but "Val" is trapped in time while Flash knew no inhibitions. Accordingly, I choose FLASH GORDON which encompassed every form of high adventure as the number one comic strip to date. Third choice: Burne Hogarth's rendition of TARZAN.

Who's your favorite pro inker?

Joe Sinnott's precise pen is first; then Tom Palmer's soft shading. However, in fan polls I often vote for John Severin as best inker. He's a favorite of mine from the E.C. days. Like the others, he's much more than just an inker. He could easily handle all the chores on a comic magazine; writer, artist *and* editor. But, he's been through it once and why should he knock himself out trying to be creative? The comic medium under its present restrictions wouldn't allow him the freedom of expression he displayed in the old TWO FISTED TALES.

What do you think of the present number of 'zines being published in fandom now?

Fandom has the same problem as prodom. Too many publications. You can't possibly buy all of either, and you invariably miss something you would have valued.

Perhaps the Academy of Comic Book Arts will encourage companies to produce thicker, less frequent publications and the attitude will be reflected by fandom. I hope so; the comic buying public is just not capable of consuming the deluge of publications that professionals and amatuers are capable of producing.

Just how did you get the idea to write "around" the comics' characters, so as to avoid any copyright/legal problems?

Everyone wants to make up stories involving their favorite characters. But, since they can't be published, even for fun, names have to be changed or omitted. As stories, my "stories" are very weak; they are *suggestions* for real stories.

Gray Spaces was another attempt to allow fans to make up stories and story ideas. Like fan-fiction, it was not meant to be my exclusive domain. But it flopped. Which might be just as well; I prefer the more direct approach of fan-fiction anyway.

Nor is "writing around" someone else's character(s) just an amateur pastime. An excellent example of a professional effort is Phillip Jose' Farmer's double ACE novel, "The Mad Goblin/Lord Of The Trees". 'Tarzan' and 'Doc Savage' are featured in concurrent stories. It is slightly terrific.

There's been a lot of talk in fandom to the effect that fans are becoming too money minded, the RBCC is getting too commercial, fanzines are becoming higher priced, et cetera. How do you feel about all of this?

The temptation to make a **fast** buck from fandom often overwhelms a would-be fan. Fortunately, the same insight that enables a true fan to recognize artwork also helps him to spot a money-grabbing phony. Like ants **at a** picnic, they'll always be **around**.

I like the **ROCKET'S BLAST**; and I'm aware that many fans don't, and why they don't. Ads and adzines are informative; limited publications are bound to be expensive. When a professional magazine really starts moving, they stop selling the magazine, and start selling advertising space. This enables them to increase quality, and keep the price of the publication nominal. Fanzines rarely, if ever, have a circulation high enough to afford this advantage. However, the ROCKET'S BLAST could improve by incorporating its "specials" into the regular publications, and featuring the ads on a "pull-out" section, ala ERB-dom/FANTASY COLLECTOR. But, that's just another opinion.

Fandom is overwhelming; it adds to what is already a "throw-away" medium. You can't embrace it all, even if you were able to buy and store *everything*. Many fans sell out, and get out; because they feel that they don't have the time or money to keep up with everything. Actually, it's just time for them to start specializing. And one of the most popular forms of specialization is to become aligned with (and concentrate on) your favorite fanzine.

Or possibly, the secret of not taking a financial beating is simply not to buy or send for anything you don't *really* want.

What's the one thing in a 'zine that can just ruin it for you?

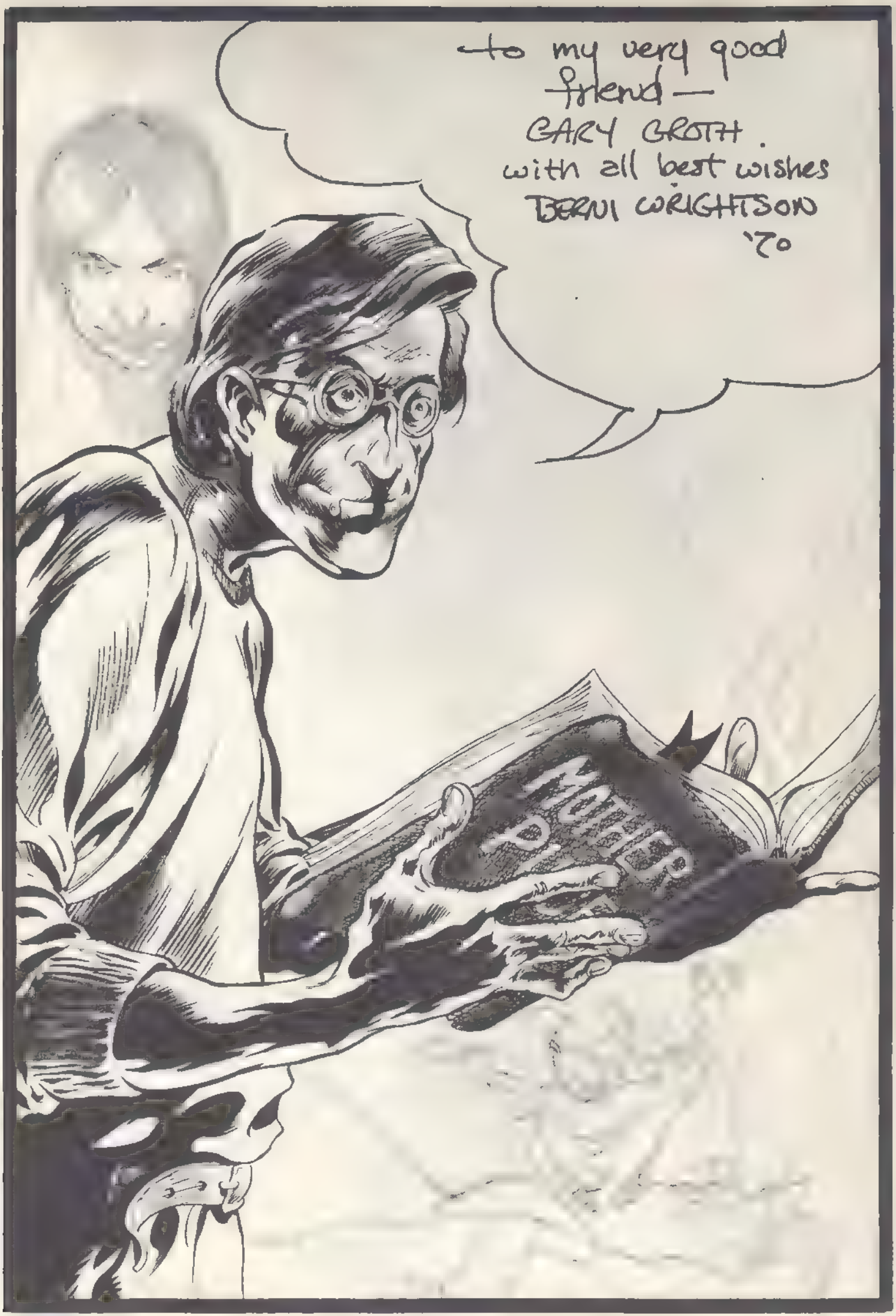
Aside from the 'zine that doesn't get published after all, the "rush job" is my pet hate. Often it is obvious that a few "fans" have pooled some purloined artwork and surrounded it with unrelated or just plain unintelligent articles. They'd have done much better to contribute to an existing publication, or issued prints and posters. But, they're anxious to see their names in print, or to become a "name" in fandom. They get a name alright but we can't print it here.

Would you ever like to publish a fanzine yourself someday?

No. I'm quite content to let someone else endure the slings and arrows of outraged fandom.

And lastly, what type of stories do you like to write best?

Dirty. No. I'd like to be able to write fantasy, or more exactly, heroic-fantasy. Stories wherein "all men are mighty, and all women beautiful". It is the purist form of escape-entertainment, and the finest example of the highly communicative, story-telling desire that is a vital part of the human psyche.


to my very good friend—
GARY GROTH.
with all best wishes
BERNI WRIGHTSON
'80
BATMAN

A RUSHED & BELATED REPORT ON
THE 1970 METRO COMICON
by Bill Cantey

Beginning Saturday, August 21st, the convention appeared, to this inexperienced fan, to be well laid out. The registration desk and the entrance to the convention floor was directly off the second floor lobby of the Crystal City Mariott Hotel. And a plush scene it was. Heavy carpeting and a more-than-needed number of comfortable chairs with convenient tables (for perusing portfolios and such) made crowding unnecessary so that the opening was managed smoothly and quietly. The corridor, which had been transformed into a gallery of original, comic oriented artwork, was flanked on one side by a wall of clear glass admitting daylight, and on the other by entrances to the Luncheon area, dealers room, and auditorium. A tour down the alleyway of talent would've impressed *any* visitor with the quality of artwork that exists within the comic book industry. A good idea might have been to allow interested outsiders (and there were plenty) to have a quick look at displayed paintings and panels; a great way to win converts, if it could be arranged.

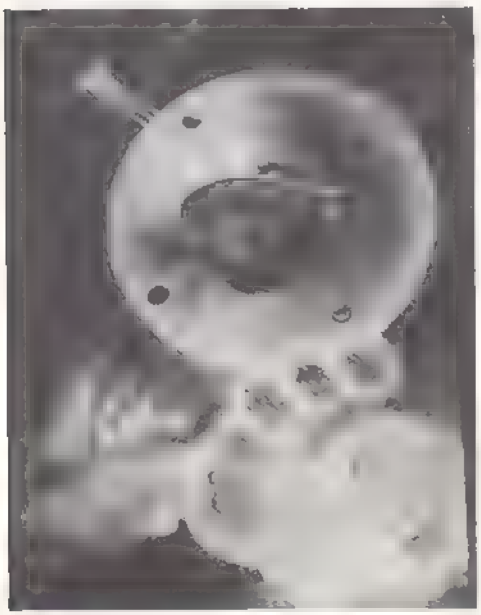
Well represented was the electrifying style of John Fantucchio's fantastic talent; his pulsating paintings crackled with color. The collection included a large portrait of John's mystery character. Larger than life-size perhaps, but who knows? Maybe he's a giant. On tables, under clear plastic, were full-size pages of original comic art. Several pages of Sal Buscema's precise pencilling was the neatest, tightest example of un-inked artwork that this fan has ever seen. The effect was much more memorable than the finished product which appears on the newstands. No one who's seen such an exhibit would be likely to consider comics a mechanized "non-art" again; the lively touch of human talent is much too evident. Additions were made to the exhibit as the convention progressed. Also presented was the *entire* original artwork for Berni Wrightson's "Feed It" which appeared in WEB OF HORROR # 3. The cover painting from that same issue graced a nearby easel. Sadly, a beautiful Wrightson illustration was *stolen*. It was a pen line drawing of a carefully rendered fantasy scene. The setting was mountainious; in the foreground were three amazons wearing little more than their weapons. A Burroughs-type "lost city" is seen in the background. As far as I know, the drawing was unpublished. Further down the hall, Mike Kaluta's talent was in evidence, as was Steve Hickman's. At the end of the hall was a huge painting by Steve. A space scene of rockets and planets; with sun-bursts and star-shines creating beautiful effects of light and color across a canvas over six feet square! *Nobody stole that!*

Jim Baldwin, my cousin (also from Charleston) joined me about that time. And after a quick look into the dealers' room, the convention activities began with Sal Buscema's keynote speech. Sal, with other visiting pros would fill in for the absent guest of honor, Neal Adams. But, a Neal Adams interview was featured in the convention program booklet; so he was very much there, in spirit.

Sal Buscema's speech was well delivered. He spoke on the need to improve the image of the "lowly" comic book in the eyes of the general public; and the hope of doing so in the future, via upgrading comics in general, the encouragement of a growing fandom, and the purposeful formation of The Academy of Comic Book Arts. Sal himself is an excellent image of the comic book industry. He is a fine artist who could easily "graduate" into a more socially accepted form of commercial art. But, he *believes* in the graphic story as an artform as well as a highly specialized method of story-telling. Questions and comments followed to a preview of what was to be a highly communicative convention; due, in large part, to the out going personality of Sal Buscema with his gift of gab and genuine fondness for people.

This photo of a part of the exhibit hall was taken early Saturday morning, before registration began.

Sal Buscema, giving Keynote Speech



This Black & White photo doesn't do justice to Steve Hickman's beautiful SPACE MURAL!

The Sunday Luncheon had already been cancelled, but Saturday's was on. Seated at the high table were Marv Wolfman, Berni Wrightson, and Mike Kaluta. Later, I would learn that I'd been sitting at a table with Steve Hickman. Like many talented people, Steve is quiet and unassuming. If I'd painted the explosive canvas on display, I'd have carried a sign proclaiming, "I'm Steve Hickman!" The Luncheon was a highly enjoyable event. Wolfman has a talent for off-the-cuff speaking which rivaled the fluency of Sal Buscema. Comments and discussion questions were fast and numerous. Marv Wolfman vouchsafed information on new ideas forthcoming from D.C., which have since become reality and/or history. Wrightson and Kaluta, close friends, spoke on pet projects and past triumphs. I can't recall all that was said, but several items made an impression even in my thick skull. Given a free hand, Mike Kaluta would like to illustrate fairy tales. Which sounds pretty dull unless you've read some of the macabre gems from the brothers Grimm; "The Snow Queen" being an excellent example. His suggested approach to graphic heroic-fantasy was a novel idea; his hero would be a powerful, hunchbacked dwarf, who allows his tall, handsome partner to take all the bows. Why? Because it's good for business, dragon killing or whatever. Mike is a fan of writer/artist Wallace Wood. Among the publications mentioned were the fanzines, THIS IS LEGEND and ABYSS. Both feature work by Wrightson and Kaluta. Since all three guests are enthusiastic fans of their chosen profession, and enthusiasm is contagious, we very nearly got involved in Sword & Sorcery, which was to be the subject of a scheduled panel discussion later. But time was up, and we had to get out.

After the luncheon, Jim and I had the extreme good fortune to engage artist Bob Kline in a private conversation. Bob looks more like a college fullback than the master of the fine line. At my urging, the friendly fullback unlimbered his portfolio and treated us to a close-up view of some really great artwork. I'd seen some of Bob's work in fanzines, but reproductions don't do him justice. The effect of his halftones and the quality of his colors are more than professional. He was justly proud of a Conan illustration, a scene from QUEEN OF THE BLACK COAST. Bob had involved two forms and sources of light, torchlight and moonlight. This illustration had already been printed in ANOMALY, and has since been more successfully re-presented as a poster. But, the original picture *glows*; light seems to come out of the illustration. Unless the attitude of comic books changes even more, Bob might do well to go into magazine illustration and cover painting. He even had the illustration he drew for my "Ka-Zar" story in FANTASTIC FANZINE # 11. But not for long; I've got it now. The talk with Bob Kline, and the procurement of that illustration was, for me, the high point of the convention.

Sal Buscema's chalk-talk amazed me. How anyone could draw anything under such difficult conditions is beyond me. But, he drew three large illustrations, and seemed to enjoy his task as much as his audience. Sketching lightly in pencil, and finishing with a black marking tool, Sal executed full length renderings of the Hulk (his favorite character) and the Silver Surfer. Then changing his method, he drew a larger-than-life head, and shoulders shot of The Mighty Thor. The Thor illo was the best and brought a high price at the Sunday auction.

I attended the auctions out of curiosity since I was allowing myself the expense of the trip only. Still, I couldn't resist buying a Cockrum drawing at a near giveaway bid. Other than that, I just sat there and silently cried while a Conan illustration by Wrightson, a Mr. "A" drawing by Ditko, a Sub-Mariner painting by Fantucchio, and the Sal Buscema posters went for very high prices. Active in the bidding was Martin Greim, editor of COMIC CRUSADER. His bid took the unpublished Wrightson, and later, the chalk-talk Thor.

There was time between events to check the dealers room. Although it wasn't as large or complete as I'd hoped, I managed to pick up several fan publications and close some gaps in my comics collection. Two notable items were on sale; the remaindered Buck Rogers hardback and the soft cover, STERANKO'S HISTORY OF COMICS. Fantastic Fanzine Enterprises [Now Fanta-Graphics] offered several fine posters (some free) which were great souvenirs for the --ah-- less affluent fan. And for those who had the money, very old comics and sort-after trivia were on sale.

The Film Showing was a complete washout. A few silent movies were being shown when the projector broke down! And everyone retired to their rooms to read STERANKO'S HISTORY OF COMICS, to sleep, or whatever.

Next morning began the postponed panel on Sword & Sorcery in Comics. By now the convention Program was just another souvenir, albeit a valued one. The panel positions were well filled by Dave Cockrum, Bob Kline, Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, and Steve Hickman. Their remarks were far too numerous for complete recollection. But mostly the discussion concerned the possibility and problems of presenting sword & sorcery in the then existing line of Code restricted comics. The problem, of course, is that most sword & sorcery involves a great deal of bloody, flesh-rending action as well as an abundance of naked females; and the Code condemns both nudity and violent action. Big Dave Cockrum looked very much like a character from the world of heroic-fantasy with his longish blonde hair and full beard. Had he been holding a broadsword across his knees, it would not have seemed out of place. Dave judged the success of real sword & sorcery by Marvel or D.C. a remote possibility. Of course since then, the Code has loosened up a little, Marvel has brought out SAVAGE TALES, and Dave has gone to work for Warren Publications. (If you missed his artwork in VAMPIRELLA # 11, you missed a sword-swining good one). Kline said that

Left to right: Marvin Wolfman, Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta at Banquet Luncheon.

Panel: Sword & Sorcery In Comics. Panel members, from left to right: Bob Kline, Dave Cockrum, Berni Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, Steve Hickman.

it couldn't be done, not under the present restrictions. Wrightson felt it might be done, via the "suggested" illustration. Sword & sorcery being a shadowy world, the action could take place in a darkened area or even "off-camera;" with nudity handled in the same fashion, suggested -- not shown. Berni's Nightmaster renderings had been very recent, and he seemed satisfied with the basic idea. Nightmaster, you may recall, had an earth-bound alter-ego in the form of a rock singer. Wrightson hardily endorsed the idea, expressing disappointment that it hadn't succeeded.

Personally, I preferred the situation in "--And In A Far-Off Land" (WITCHING HOUR # 3) wherein a life-imprisoned convict was drawn by magic into a bizarre world of fantasy adventure. It was an early Wrightson effort that preceded the milder Nightmaster. Kaluta remade his suggestion for a non-serious approach with his distorted dwarf idea. Which reminded the panel of some recent Wallace Wood contributions. At that time, Mike's ideal had already made some comparatively bold efforts to combine sword & sorcery with the graphic story. TOWER OF SHADOWS numbers 5, 6, and 7 contain some of Wood's best, recent work for Marvel. Those stories, "Flight Into Fear," "The Ghost-Beast," and "Of Swords And Sorcery," were *written and drawn* by Wood. They stand as more than fair indications of how good fantasy-adventure in comics could be if graphic creators like Wallace Wood might be allowed to produce, unfettered. The more recent "War Of The Wizards' in VAMPIRELLA # 10 being a refreshing sample. However,

About one-fifth of the dealers room.

even without this most recent triumph, Wood's then latest efforts were applauded by the entire panel. Hickman claimed that sword & sorcery was not a good choice of material for comics since he felt that the only *real* sources of sword & sorcery adventures was the highly limited works of Robert E. Howard. (Hmmm -- what about John Jakes, Fritz Leiber, Lin Carter, L. Sprague de Camp --?) Anyway, Steve applauded the general use of science fiction and fantasy in comics; especially mentioning Ditko's Dr. Strange with its fantastic exploitation of planes, dimensions and fantastic graphic techniques. Perhaps suggesting that comics should offer those unique effects that no other medium can manage without a great deal of expense. As we now see, sword & sorcery is being tried (or re-tried), and I hope it'll be the biggest success in the comic book industry since Superman.

"Comic Books, Past, Present, & Future" was a fine lecture, complete with placards, delivered by John Fantucchio. Comic Book History was cut to the bone; which still left a lot to cover. A staggering amount of material must have been researched to prepare the capsule report of over twenty-five years of comics. A very interesting and relevant report. Immediately afterwards, a panel of visiting pros batted questions and answers back and forth with anyone who wanted to suggest, predict, or speculate on the future of comics. The pros were most interested in how the fans thought the Code should be changed. Which is actually a very testy question. It is extremely difficult to attack the Code without attacking morality itself. And creative-expression privileges have too often been abused by the mongers of gross sensationalism. (Well drawn gross sensationalism might not be too bad; but the two seldom go hand-in-hand. Usually it's bad all the way around). However, the really talented artists/writers in the business will not prostitute their talents in base directions. (E.C.'s artists often passed up assignments they thought were too rough). I'm for "bonding" the recognized and respected comic creators, then giving them a free rein. No Code; just an honor system underwriting personal integrity.

I missed the art contest, but cousin Jim had an entry picked and won third prize, a Kline drawing of Nick Fury, the original of the print that appeared in FANTASTIC FANZINE # 11.

We left before the end of the final auction and the official close of the convention. Berni Wrightson stayed until the bitter end, assisting in the auctioneering and maintaining the high degree of enthusiasm that prevailed throughout the entire convention. Berni Wrightson, still a fan as well as one of the finest talents in the business.

All things considered, I judged the convention a success. True, some things that were supposed to happen, didn't. But enough unscheduled incidents filled the void and pros aplenty abounded. The location was ideal, the company was the best.

In closing, I encourage all interested fans to check COMIC CRUSADER # 10 for a more concise report of the '70 Metrocon. Although I've not seen Martin Greim's convention coverage issue as of this date, I'm sure it's superior to mine. This was my first convention, and so, my first report.

FF's staff fullback - Bob Kline!

FANTASTIC FANZINE FEATURES FANDOM'S

FANTUCCHIO

WELCOME TO THE COMIC FANDOM WORLD OF JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO ! I'M YOUR HOSTESS, THIRTEEN. IN THE PAGES TO FOLLOW YOU WILL VISIT THE FANTUCCHIOS, BEHOLD A GALLERY OF PAINTINGS, AND PERHAPS WITNESS A HINT OF PHANTOMS TO MATERIALIZE...

Mr. & Mrs. Taylor Godfrey at home
We would enjoy hearing from you. John & Mary

WELL, WHAT DID YOU EXPECT A 400 YEAR OLD LEGEND TO LOOK LIKE ?

PURCELL

an interview with HOWARD PURCELL

conducted by joe mosca

About a year ago, I, Joe Mosca, came across a most interesting letter in one of D.C.'s mystery mags. The letter inquired about several of their older artists and writers that had worked for HOUSE OF MYSTERY, HOUSE OF SECRETS, and THE UNEXPECTED in previous years. Editor Murray Boltinoff gave a most interesting answer: Writer John Broome is painting in Paris, Bernard Baily publishes a line of adventure mags, and Howard Purcell teaches art in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvannia which is only ONE MILE from where I live! That same night, with the help of a local operator, I contacted Howard Purcell and asked if he would consent to an interview. He consented and we got together at his home a week later. During the interview, which took close to three hours, Howard recalled his work on GREEN LANTERN, HOP HARRIGAN, GANGBUSTERS, and RED, WHITE AND BLUE. Some of his other creations include JOHNNY PERIL and SARGON THE SORCERER.

During the year that I've known him, he's been both friend and teacher, always willing to take the time with his friends and acquaintances. Howard's other interests include painting and teaching art. He is without a doubt one of the founding fathers of the comic industry.

JOE: First of all, could you give us a little background of yourself as to where you were born, boyhood interests, formal training in art, and so on?

HOWARD: Well, let's see. I was born in the state of Washington, November, 1918. The day World War I ended. I grew up on the west coast. When I was 16 I won a Tri-State Mural Competition. It was to decorate the new Arlington High School in Oregon. When it came through that I had won, they found out that I was under age, so there was quite an arguement as to whether I could do it or not. But the people in the school district went to bat for me and I was allowed to do it. I did six walls of the cafeteria of the school on cooking and the culinary arts. I spent three months doing that. I sent those out east to a man named Walter Beck, who himself hangs in the Washington Museum of Art and had a book called "Self Development in Drawing." I had read his book and was fascinated. When he saw photographs of my work he sent for me and I enrolled at the Art Students League. Prior to that during this same period, I worked for a subsidiary of Walt Disney Productions in animated cartooning. This was a young company that started cartooning in Portland with the backing of Walt Disney and R.K.O. Sound. We turned out Phoney Phones and Hysterical Historics for a period of over two years. Eventually the company broke up and the various artists went south to work for larger animated outfits, while I went east when I received this offer from Walter Beck. I also attended lectures under Harvey Dunn and Dean Cornwell. I studied Corbinus at the League and Sternberg for murals. I was going to be a mural painter but I ended up a comic artist instead. I was 18 when I first broke into D.C. in 1938. Actually I had no money and I was tired of working at Netik, the sandwich shop at the corner, so I made up a character and just for the hell of it, called it MARK LANCING OF MIKOSHOME. Then I walked into a place at 480 Lexington Avenue. D.C. SUPERMAN COMICS. They looked at it and said "Could you make a story out of it?" And I said yes. Although at the time I had no idea what the story would be. Whitney Ellsworth, then, who was a great guy, a top editor for many, many years, and who is now working on the west coast, dipped into his pocket and said "You look like you need a pants press and a shave. How are you fixed for money?" I remember saying not too good. So he said "Here's thirty dollars. Go out and get yourself cleaned up and see me in a few days." When I got out of the building I suddenly realized that I hadn't even given him my name. I then went to work for D.C. and it was a relationship that lasted for over thirty years. I've been borrowing money from them ever since, but they've always gotten paid back. I think that I've worked over 25 different strips during that time.

JOE: Have you ever written any of your own material?

HOWARD: Oh, many, many. I wrote and started JOHNNY PERIL. Then it went defuncto. Then they asked me to revive it only a short time ago, and they ran it again. I did the first issue; the pencils, the cover, and the story. It was taken over by another artist because at that time I went on the BLACK KNIGHT. I did a couple of those and another one will soon be released - another 22 pager. One minute, you know, you're not on the stands at all, then, all of a sudden, you're out in four different books. And people say Holy Makone! How does he do all that work? Well, it accumulates, then they release a number of things. For instance, D.C. has some stuff of mine that I wrote and drew for them. THE STRAMEN. They're seperate stories of time and space and so on. I used to do a thing for D.C. some years ago called just "A Story." A lot of old artists will remember this one. They were along the line of THE SPIRIT. They were just normal, natural stories. We weren't always beating somebody's brains out, but it was popular for quite some time.

When I went into the service there was quite some break in my art operations. When I came back I had to reajust because I had been gone for quite some time. But I picked it up again and worked for some time under Sheldon Meyer, who was my editor for some time during that period. Also, during that period I started SARGON THE SORCERER which was eventually picked up by Kubert. When Bloomer left D.C. he was doing HAP HARRIGAN, AMERICA'S ACE OF THE AIRWAYS. I took it over and wrote and drew it for two or three years, when for a brief time (they were using me as a Jack Of All Trades then because I was young and could work all night and all day) I took over GREEN LANTERN. GREEN LANTERN had just started and I did the first cover and first decent cover I might say, for the first all GREEN LANTERN book. This dates back to 1939 or 1940 or somewhere back there. Then I did the GREEN LANTERN covers for ALL AMERICAN COMICS for some time after that. I also did some of the GREEN LANTERN scripts. Then I did GAY GHOST for awhile. But the competition was too great. I was up against WONDER WOMAN which was catching on like crazy, and we were both in the same book. It was a 64 page mag and I was getting only 12 pages while WONDER WOMAN was getting 13 or 14. But I still did that for a long, long time.

At that point I left it to take over RED, WHITE AND BLUE, SOLDIER, SAILOR AND MARINE with DORIS of G-2. I took that over when Smith, I think his name was, left it. So I did that for awhile. I also did for several years, MR. DISTRICT ATTORNEY from the old radio show. I turned the book out on that. My inker was Worthmen. I often wonder where he is today. He was a good inker, a solid inker. When he and I worked on a job we turned out a pretty nice product. During that time for D.C. I did work for GANGBUSTERS along with HOUSE OF MYSTERY and HOUSE OF SECRETS. You see, I've always done something for Science Fiction of the mysterioso type thing, of which, Joe, I've done literally hundreds and you'd probably recognize them if you saw them. I've got stacks of them but I rarely, if ever, sign my name. When I did MARK LANCING OF MIKOSHOME I didn't sign my name. Ellsworth said "What's the matter? Are you ashamed of your work?" And I said no. The next issue that came out I had a huge signature, and he said "Look. Is this MARK LANCING by Howard Purcell or HOWARD PURCELL by Mark Lancing? I was a little embarassed after that so the next time I just put a little "H.P," in the corner. So some things I've signed, and some things I haven't. You get known in the trade anyway. They learn what your work looks like.

Then I was always splitting from one thing to another. I was never what you could call a comic book artist. I was always taking flyers into illustration. For a short time in the fifties, I did some work for Blue Book --- McCall's Corporation. I did things on Red Navy, submarines, sinkings and things of that nature. Then the editor of BLUE BOOK retired and a whole new broom came in with a new staff and everything. So I left BLUE BOOK and went with WIDER PUBLICATIONS. And I did some illustrations for the MAGAZINE FURY. After that I went back to my bread and butter --- comics! I was asked to do another story and I was right back in the thick of it again. Also in the fifties I had a chance to teach art in a school that had mainly G.I.'s returning from Korea. So I did that for two years and comics at the same time. As the years kept rolling by I did a book on AQUAMAN and HAWKMAN for D.C. which they liked very much; I pencilled and inked that

book from cover to cover! Then I got Sea Devils *[Some of Howard's original wash covers appear elsewhere]*. I would do that and the HOUSE OF MYSTERY at the same time. They had me under water for some time and when I came up for air that was the end of that period. So I went back into illustration and did covers for Science Fiction Magazines. Now before I keep talking, are there any other questions?

JOE: [Laughter] Well, you've answered about the first twelve.

HOWARD: I probably have without realizing it.

JOE: Since this is an interview for a 'zine slanting towards Marvel, maybe I'd better ask you about them. We haven't seen any of your work in any of the Marvel mags since Silver Surfer # 7. Any reason for this?

HOWARD: Yeah - well, for Marvel I did the BLACK KNIGHT; then I did a few stories of THE WATCHER. Then I did another BLACK KNIGHT --- another 22 pager. According to Stan Lee he's going to spring it when he feels ready. He said the BLACK KNIGHT is a very peculiar thing. They gave it a lot of push and if you'll notice that all the artists were working on him and he was suddenly appearing everywhere, then they tamed him down again. It seems like down at Marvel, they'll push a character to see how he's going. Will it take or won't it take? And according to the demand of the moment they will either soft peddle it or hold it. Then they'll wait and come back with it. You'll notice that there'll be a big pressure on a certain character all of a sudden. He'll be appearing in everything and then he'll fade and there doesn't seem much doing with him. Stan Lee was concerned; he said "I'm not too sure if the BLACK KNIGHT would ever continue to have his own book. We'll just run tests and find out," They have a story lined up and waiting, and I guess we'll see what develops with it --- see if it pops out.

In the meantime, while that was lying on the fire, D.C. approached me and asked if I'd start preparing a new book for them; I'd write and draw the stories. I have to be a little careful with this because this book is in preparation for coming out so I don't want to anticipate them. They might be annoyed at me for handing out names and titles and stories and so forth, but it's another magazine. I turned the whole book out from cover to cover

and I have a beautiful cover on it. I did it in craftint and I'm very happy with it. They're a little concerned about the reproduction of it because I used the fine screen craftint and they're hoping that it won't lose. But they liked it very much and I'm anxious to see the results. This is a supernatural type book again, Stories of this nature right now seem to be selling well. I've always had a yen for this. In fact, this is a 14 page story I'm doing for it now [Showing me some of the pencilled pages]. When this is done I'll be going in during the next few days I imagine. School is out now so I have more time to concentrate on this work. I am trying to set myself up with the school so I can have more free time= I have a better deal now than I had last year with them. I set up a commercial Art Department here in Wiles Barre over at the Luzerne County Community College. It seemed very gratifying. It really has. We teach commercial art, the pen and ink work, and we teach kids to draw and make a dollar. That's the whole idea behind it. I've already had good luck with one youngster, David Cook, who has already sold to ANALOG SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. He's pretty thrilled about it. He walked right down into New York, into the "Tigers Nest" you might say, and he sold.

Some of the kids up here in this area, as you know, are not as sophisticated and as close to the markets as their brothers down in New York, and so to walk down into there and make a sale like that is something to be kinda' proud of. I now teach over at the school, so anything over fifteen hours is overtime for me and I get an added income, So now I can work on the premises which will give me more time for comic strip work in the future — so next fall I'll have more time. On the same token I'm doing illustrations (paintings). I intend to unload on the pocket book market, because that's pretty fair market with POPULAR, GOLDMEDAL, PENQUIM, and CARDINAL pocketbook editions and there's good money in it. And I did like to paint as well as draw strips. So, I'm sort of split like this in my desires and what I do. Yet I feel as guilty as the devil if I don't turn out a certain amount of comic strip work, because you can't do it for 30 or 32 years without becoming attached to it. So I still keep my hand in it. As I said, you're liable to see me in the next month or so in three books and Bang Bang Bang, here we go again. I did a little stuff for Stan Lee on Nick Fury. I finished and worked up Kirby's pencils. We did a job on that and then a few others. I didn't care for that. I don't like to put together another man's work and it showed in the drawings.

JOE: I also noticed that the panel arrangement was all boxes.

HOWARD: Yeah, I was constricted. It wasn't my cup of tea I'll tell you, but take nothing away from Kirby. He is as good as they come.

JOE: Did you know that he resigned from Marvel?

HOWARD: Has he too? *[Note: This interview was conducted before most of fandom knew of Kirby's leaving Marvel -GGG].*

JOE: In March.

HOWARD: My God! I didn't realize that!

JOE: It's in all the recent issues.

HOWARD: They send me everything. I must get 30 or 40 books from them a month, And along with D.C.'s books, they really pile up. I've got stacks of them in the basement dating back to 1938. So you can see there's an awful flock of them. I'm suprised though, because he's the right hand man of Stan Lee. Those two have worked in unison for many, many years and I can't help but think Stan Lee would be crippled without him. And there's only one place where Kirby would go --- D.C. But don't worry; despite the law suits of the past they will come to terms. People do in business.

[Note: For certain reasons, the tape was turned off at this point; I will pick up with the following question]:

JOE: When we talked on the phone earlier this week you said that every time you want a story assignment, you go down to New York, to Marvel or D.C. and wait for an opening. . .

HOWARD: No, not really. I just telephone. Now with D.C. I have used the mails almost exclusively. Over the years, in fact, there were times when I would go down to New York only twice a year. Then there were times when I would go down once every two weeks or once a month simply because I realized that I had to keep my hand in over the years. I was getting too far away from the activities and the association of the other artists which is not always a good thing. With Stan Lee I receive quite complete freedom. For instance, I sat up with his young editor -- the young kid -- I'm trying to think of his name. . .

JOE: Thomas?

HOWARD: Right! Roy Thomas. We got together over the phone for that first BLACK KNIGHT story and we wrote it over the phone! It took over one hour, We made notes, talked back and forth and he said "Well, this is more simple than you coming to New York." So we did the whole thing over the phone. It didn't bother them and it didn't bother me. When we hung up I had notes all laid out in front of me for a long story so I sat down and wrote it and he made editorial changes when it came in, I just made footnotes a-

round the panels. Now in working with Stan Lee it was not required that I come in with everything, but not having worked as much with them as with D.C. I would prefer to come in and I would come in, in case there were any changes to be made or corrections needed, The only unhappy note about this Black Knight was the fact that I did them a good set of pencils and they liked them; but at this time they were having trouble with inkers and if you'll notice on the leadoff, it says "Inked by Dan Adkins and Company." Roy Thomas told me that Dan was terribly busy and he tried to make the Master Inks on the good stuff. So they were trying different inkers; no less than FIVE DIFFERENT INKERS WORKED ON THAT STRIP! And that was enough to butcher it in my book. You can unerringly pick out where Dan Adkins inked; all the good panels were by Adkins. But Roy said "Look, it went over fine. It was very successful. They're calling you 'Sir Howard of Purcell' so relax." And I said it hurts me! I gave them a good set of pencils and they chopped them up terribly, You have all those people trying to ink and some got fouled up on my panels and changed panels. It just looked childish, I was unhappy about that. I really was. But what can you do? They were in somewhat the same situation themselves. I mean if you can't get the inkers you

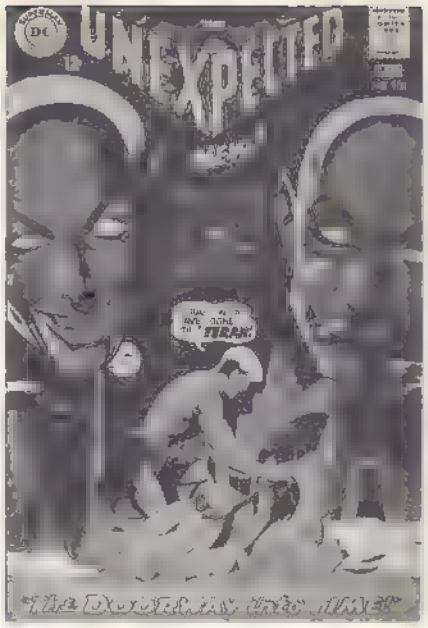
can't get the inkers. But I'd like to have Dan Adkins ink all my stuff, I like Dan Adkins, I think he's an excellent man with a pen or a brush or whatever material he uses. He's as clean as a hounds tooth! He goes right to the core of the thing. He doesn't fool around with nonsense. This business of wiggly lines and this artistic nonsense that does nothing but cloud the issue. You may realize this or you may not but I don't like to ink. I never have. I could make beautiful pencils, but my inks -- I had to slave over them. But I LOVE to do wash work. I would have loved to do some of their wash stories for them. I know I can handle wash well; I have the proof in my reproductions. Although there isn't much opening for this kind of thing in the comic book business. But Dan is a fine inker. He's working out well with Wood.

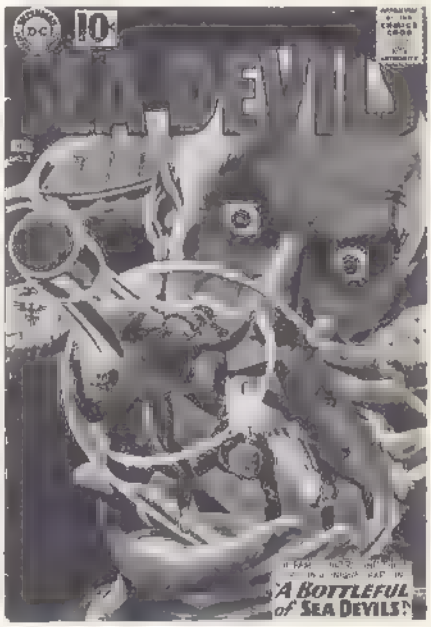
JOE: They're very similar in their style.

HOWARD: Their similarity is in their style, as you say, but Dan, in my book is a terrific artist. I like Steranko too. Steranko is a person who in my mind is just developing and he's going in all directions at once. And they're going to be great directions, believe me. Because the guy's an innovator. He's not just satisfied to do a script. He's got to tear the guts out of it and put it back together again. And when you see it, you read it because it's so different. That's one thing he's got going for him. He's a wonderful artist. There's a lot of fresh new blood coming in and that's interesting. But believe me when I say we're going to need more. Because the comic book industry, up to a point, is an old mans industry! There's a bunch of old boys doing it and soon they'll be gone and you'll need a whole new crew. Believe me, in art, music, drama, and so on there will always be room for a good man. I honestly, firmly believe this. You take a youngster that is sincere and that works and plugs and stays with it - if he's got anything to offer, they're willing to look, and they'll be helpful. I've never seen anyone turned away, unless the person is just a nuisance. I have seen kids just hanging around the offices and I KNOW they've been pretty pesty. They want autographs, they want sketches, they want comic books, and up to a point the management tries to be nice. But they can't turn their offices over to these fans who just sit around all day and chew the fat just because they're interested in art. There's a time for business and a time for the other.

If you do your work well, and you make up your samples and go down there as a young business man and ask for an appointment, you'll get your appointment and they'll look at your stuff. Believe me, if you've got anything to offer they're willing to look. Young David Cook who I sent to ANALOG - I sent him first to Kubert, Kubert turned himself inside out to be kind to him. He gave him stuff to take home and work from. He gave him a test script to work on, which he's working on now. I also sent him to Stan Lee. When Stan found out that he wasn't of the nuisance variety he gave him a STACK of things to work on; stats, photostats, original artwork to take home and study the pen and brush techniques. Stan told him that he was right on the verge. They were sure they could use him, as an inker, because he has a nice clean inking style.

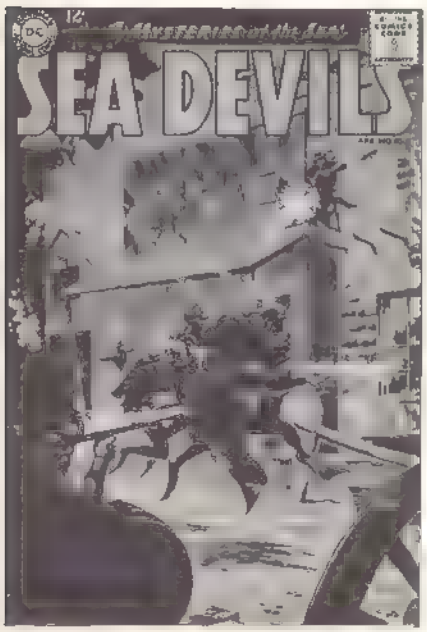
So remember -- the old are getting older, the young are coming in and you have to have young new people and young new





ideas. Somebody has to take these jobs over. It might as well be you or the next fellow that works a little harder than the fellow who sits back and says "Well, the market's glutted and I can't get in and they won't look at my work and oh me, oh my." Not so. I have found that the bigger the company the more gracious. It's usually the small little companye that are unfriendly and take advantage of you. The company that's gotten up there can afford to be kind and helpful. Many of them have gotten up there because of this.

I've always been treated well, though. I have no gripe against the industry. It was an industry that was an orphan to begin with in a sense. As you know, Joe, or if you've studied the old books, the art was poor, the lettering was bad, the stories were slip-shod. It grew out of nothing and today it's a sharp industry. Today there are a lot of clever men in it. I notice we've started the Academy of Comic Book Arts. I received the literature in the mail and I'm going to join. I hope to become a Charter Member because, Lord knows, I've been at it long enough. I'll be proud to be a member of it. It's going to try to keep an eye on our industry and I think the general result will be a sharpening up of the in-



dustry all the way down the line.

Look at these drawings here *[showing Joe the Sea Devil wash covers shown elsewhere in the interview]*. There's not an ounce of opaque used on these. The white of the paper is the highest light. I like wash because if it's not right I can go over it and make it just right. That's why I'm not partial to watercolors on a thing like this. With watercolors you pick it up again and keep playing with it. When you put it down in india ink that's it. And it makes for very clean, sharp work. Wash is one of the easiest forms of halftone there is to reproduce. You can't beat it! If you turn into a good black and white man, Joe, you will immediately establish value.

That's what I stress to my students. Cleanliness of the line. If it's sloppy nobody wants it. This is the one big bellyache of all the agencies across the country. The first thing they dislike about young artists coming in is untidyness of work; spatters, fingerprints all over, poor matting, poor preparation. Present your stuff as beautifully as you possibly can. Don't have one letter out of place if you're doing any hand lettering. Have it precise, perfect, and you'll go right by the other guy who'll say "Well, this is good enough."

Get the black and whites. Then the inks have got to be right. It's just a matter of fill-in. That's why I like Adkins. Adkins can ink up my work and make it beautiful. Someone else will butcher it. You know, Joe, my editor used to say to me "I don't care how you get it or what you use. All I care about is how it looks when it's on my desk."

Kubert, for instance, just doodles out his Sergeant Rock. He draws as he inks. Kubert in my book is a phenomenon. He's a beautiful artist, a tremendous man. Kirby's another one. He'll see something interesting and he'll say "I'll do something like that." The idea just triggers him. There are many others in the same group that use almost anything. I know a lot of the artists use movie stills. The reason I know is because I have thousands of movie stills myself. I bought them after World War II. I got binfolds of them when I worked at a theatre. But after all, if you're going to draw a gun or a ship or a plane, you'd better get the material right because if you don't, the stuff looks weak. The reader doesn't know what's wrong, but he doesn't like it. And that's as simple as that.

JOE: Have you ever seen any of Jim Warren's books?

HOWARD: Creepy and uncle. . , [Laughter]

JOE: Eerie,

HOWARD: Eerie, that's right. I have all his books, of course. I have them in my files. They're very useful. Every other artist uses them too. We buy them merely as collector's items, because for files and for ghoulish stuff they're great. You just look through three or four issues and you can go and bat your own out. They're really very useful.

I dropped up there once a couple years or so ago. I thought I'd do a story just for the hell of it. He wasn't in that day. He had a suite of rooms so I went up and talked to a couple of secretarys. It was on 42nd street, 42nd of 45th as I recall, just a vagrant thought and nothing ever became of it. I was immediately busy on something else and that was the end of that. I never bothered to get into these books and now they're mostly reprints. They just dress up these old stories and reproduce them. *[Note: At the time this interview was conducted, Warren was in the reprinting era of his publishing carreer; at this time Creepy and Eerie consisted of nothing but reprinted material from past issues of his mags -GGG].*

JOE: They're doing that a lot at Marvel now.

HOWARD: Yes, I think so. Too much as a matter of fact. The magazines haven't mellowed enough to afford that practice.

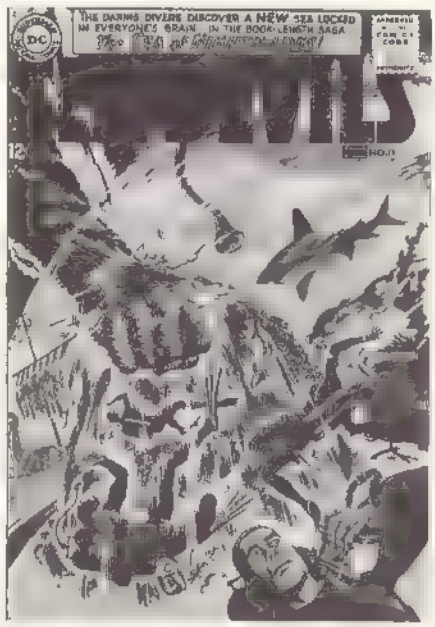
JOE: What do you think of Stan Lee?

HOWARD: He's quite a guy. Quite a dramatic guy. He loves to dramatize the action shots. He'll usually get up and illustrate how to do a sock picture and how to carry through. He's very enthusiastic about all of his art. He loves his work and he thinks it's the finest work in the world. And this is good. He sincerely loves what he does. He loves his books, and he brags about his artists. He will immediately defend his comic art and the work his staff does.

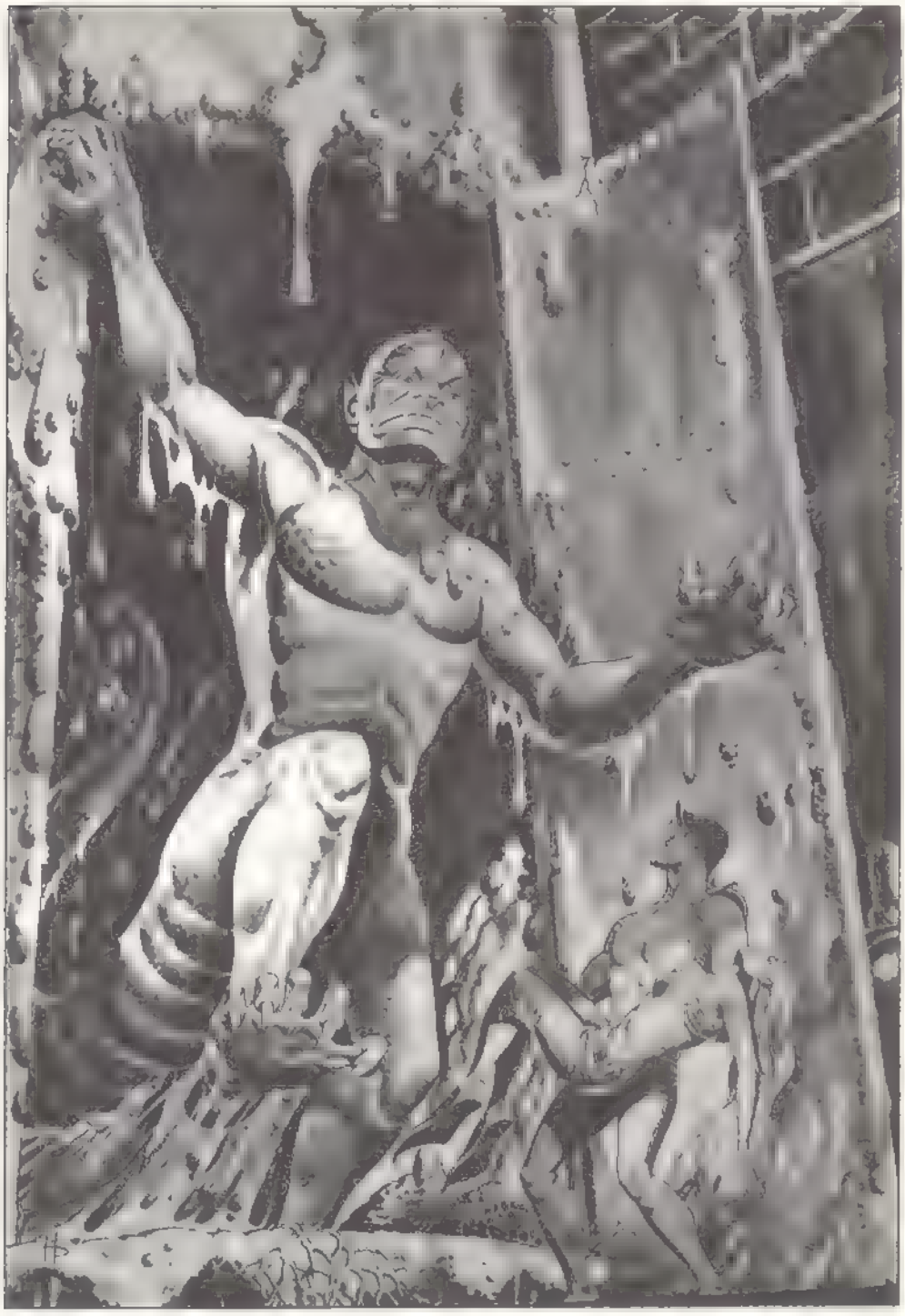
JOE: About how many pencilled pages could you turn out per day?

HOWARD: During the year when I was at my top, I could sit down and rough in a ten page job in about twelve hours. If I was taking it a little easier, but still going strong, I would rough in five, go to bed, get up and rough in the other five. Then I would go back over them and pencil them out. I used to send in a twelve page job regularly, or go in with it every two weeks. I found that to be a good working arrangement because it would give me a little time off. But I'm not as fast, Joe, as some of these real speed demons. However, I can remember sitting up and inking in an eight page job in two days. Just sitting there inking, then grabbing five hours and finishing it off; inking in a page in four hours. Of course, that's no good. You can't keep doing that forever. The pay rates are better now. The rates are at a point where a man can make a dollar. He doesn't have to kill himself as he once did. Of course the cost of living has gone up too so it's the same old business in a sense, but just not so bad.

JOE: How would you compare D.C.'s editorial policies to Marvel's?



[Editor's Note: The large cover illustrations on this and the next page, by Howard Purcell, are reproductions of two of Howard's nicest SEA DEVILS wash covers. These are being reproduced third generation, so I hope FF's reproduction does justice to Howard's fine work.]



HOWARD: I would say that D.C.'s editorial policy is a broader one. Marvel, for instance, no matter how a story is fashioned, is still a Superhero Group of books, D.C. has a wider range. D.C. carries a number of magazines on the supernatural, on romance, on pure adventure, and superhero. I'm not saying that D.C. is superior to Marvel; I'm just saying that D.C. is a bigger outfit than Marvel and turns out more books for another. The emphasis in the D.C. books is not so much as a smash picture on every page. There's more chance to develop a story. Although, once again I must qualify that. If you give Stan Lee a script, he will not throw it out just because fourteen people are not being killed on each page. But by and large I would say the editorial policy of Stan Lee is the superhero and a tremendous amount of action. And not so much in the D.C. books. D.C. tries out a numerous amount of other things too, which I'm not always crazy about, but they must be doing something right because now they're in a tremendous bargaining position. The comic book business is good. Some companys will cry business is bad and we're not selling and this and that, but don't let it worry you too much. Most of them are in a fairly good position of strength. They all have what you call their ebb tide but then the tide comes back in. There may be a summer slump or this and that, but business goes right back up and things are rolling right along. This is true in any publishing venture.

JOE: Do you have any other hobbies not pertaining to comics or art in general?

HOWARD: I've been a busy guy. We've had six children and I've put them through colleges and schools and so forth so I haven't had too much time for hobbies. I've been bending over the drawing board pretty much over my life. My hobby right now, you might say, is teaching school. I'm having as much fun as if it were a hobby. It's like the mailman taking a walk on his day off. I know I'm over there teaching kids art and I love it.

JOE: You've worked with quite a few inkers over the years. Who would you call your favorite?

HOWARD: I'd still give dandy Dan Adkins the knot on this. If I had a chance to pick an inker right now I'd grab him so fast! And we'd do some terrific stuff together. I'll tell you something Joe. If I knew he was inking something up for me I'd change everything I'm doing. I'd give it a whole new treatment.

JOE: Why would this be?

HOWARD: Because of the fact that I know what he would do with it. If you know you're working with a man with superior ability in inking you're going to go out and do art that you might not normally do. You'll say "Holy Makone! I'm going to do this because Dan will go crazy with this and it will be just beautiful!" You'll work your head off on it because you know what will come out. This makes a lot of difference; you can't help yourself.

JOE: What do you think is an ideal age to start off a career as an artist or writer?

HOWARD: Just as young as you possibly can. The quicker you're battling your way in there, the better you'll be. Get all the education you can. That's another thing I would say to any fans out there reading this interview. I see it now, now that I teach. Every piece of paper that says you've done this or you've been here is a help in some way. I also feel that if you're dedicated enough you can make it without the degrees.

JOE: Being as specific as possibly, could you tell us what artist or artists have influenced your style the most?

HOWARD: The artist that I've cared for so tremendously in the comics field, and of course this strip started when I was a youngster, and that of course, is FLASH GORDON. When Alex Raymond started that strip it was something brand new. I never realized until later that they had a strip out during that time called TIM TYLER'S LUCK by Lyman Young, whose brother does BLONDIE and DAGWOOD. It was a story of African Adventure with two boys. I noticed that the art was getting awfully good. Later I found out that Raymond was ghosting that strip and when he left it

to create FLASH GORDON it went back to being just nice drawing, but not with the flair it had before. Of course, there's another artist that I've admired as a kid and I still admire the man tremendously, and I thought the authenticity of his backgrounds and his semi-cartoonish figures were so great, and that is ROY CRANE who did WASH TUBBS for many years and is now doing BUZZ SAWYER. In the field of illustration and so on, my favorites are, of course, Harvey Dunn, the great, great American painter, and Dean Cornwell, the masterful painter. These men were giants in the thirties and forties. In the field of comics no one can forget Hal Foster and his PRINCE VALIANT. His work was once beautiful. It still is, but it's not what it was when he was at his peak --- when he was doing some of the most fantastic pen and ink work you ever saw. I'm glad to say that on Alex Raymond and Hal Foster, I've got all their stuff! And I'm glad I have.

JOE: If I remember correctly, when Alex Raymond got out of the service he left FLASH GORDON and created RIP KIRBY not too long before his fatal car crash. You want to give us the story on that?

HOWARD: Yeah. Well, Alex Raymond bought himself a fancy, hot-shot racing car, sports model. Unfortunately he wraped it around a tree one night. I was sorry when that happened because he was tremendous. He was so tremendous because he started this whole thing.

I'm not taking anything away from these men but look at this *[hands me a copy of one of the King Series FLASH GORDON mags by Al Williamson]* -- you'll recognize who this is. It's beautiful work. But every drawing here is taken from Alex Raymond. Those are old Alex Raymond drawings. I've got them all, that's why I know. All those figures are from Alex Raymond. As I said I've got everything Raymond ever did and I can dig up every one of those figures for you. All the heads, the portraits, everything. You see, there's very little original art in that book. If this man didn't have those old ones to draw from he wouldn't have a strip like this at all. I'm not taking anything away from this guy either. He's done a fabulous job. It's just terrific. Al Williamson is a fabulous artist. I rate him very highly, along with Wally Wood. He's absolutely tops! Did you ever see any of the THUNDER Agents?

JOE: I have some of the last few before they folded.

HOWARD: Yeah, they did go under didn't they? Wood did a lot of work in these. This is a guy that impresses me for put-out. He does a tremendous amount of work. I look at it and say where did he get the four arms to do it? Because as I say, I'm not that fast. I don't even want to be. I want to settle back and take my time. You see, Joe, as I get older, instead of putting in sixty drawings to a story or seventy or eighty, more and more I have the urge to make one painting and say what I want to say in that. I want to do it in one painting and take the time and pleasure in doing it. I want to do a fine thorough job. That's the conflict that lies within me now. But it's bound to happen after thirty-some years in this business. It's a natural thing to happen.

That's why I take fliers out on cover work and illustration. I like to get out and try something else just to prove I can do it. It's a great deal of satisfaction to take some paintings down to New York and come back without them. And then come out on a magazine cover and people say "Holy Makone! Did you do that? I thought you were a comic artist!" And I'll say "Yeah, yeah. I do comics but I also do this." It's a prestige thing in a sense. It's nice to be able to do and nice if you can do it. And you'll go through the same thing someday.

Also, look Joe, if you're interested in a career in this, think in terms of writing. Try and write your own stuff. There are only so many basic plots. Gather good material and build up a files system. Get books on the strange and the unusual. Get books and magazines and build up a good files system because there's your library right there. And with a little clever judgement on your part you can change and develop anything. And maybe someday, you'll be an editor or put your own books together. Young people like you who dev-

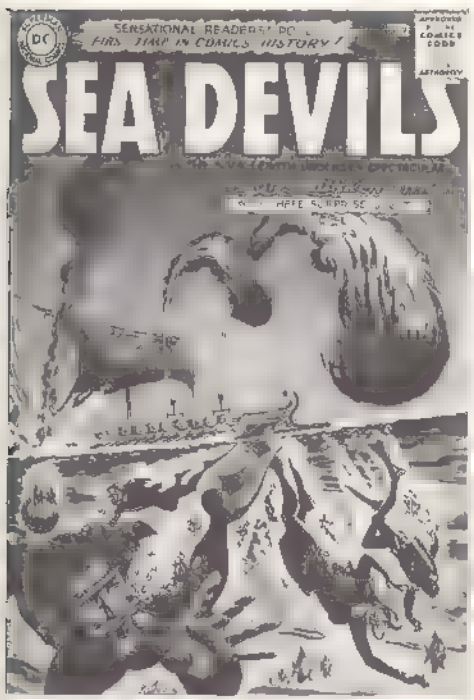
[Editor's Note: The next page is a full page, half-toned pencil drawing by Howard. This was a possible cover drawing for an old HOUSE OF MYSTERY issue.]

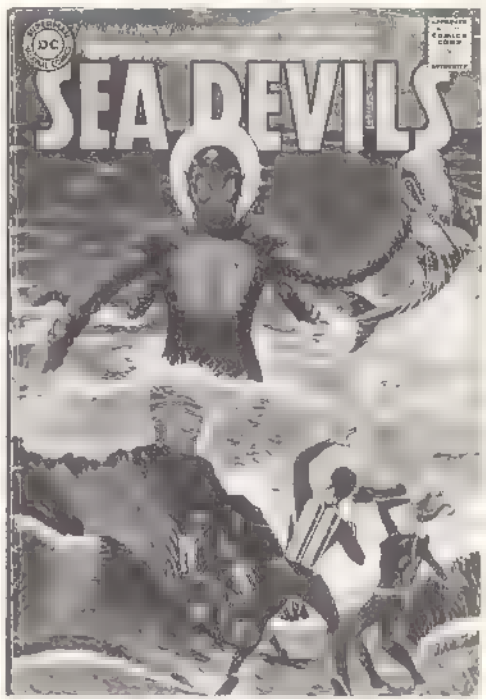
ote yourself to this have that chance. I have kids twenty, twenty-one over at class. I've got them eighteen and nineteen too, who have just graduated. And with some of them it's the one thing I try to drum into them. They don't know which way they're going, they don't know what they want to do. They're confused. What do you want to do? What plans have you made? If you haven't thought, start! Don't just draw Willy Nilly. Build up a portfolio and do it right. Some are afraid to go out and apply for work. And I have to say to them "Look! For God's sake, make a game out of it or something. Get out there and knock on doors. After a while it won't bother you at all. You'll go anyplace, and if someone treats you unfairly you just say 'Thanks bud – same to you!' and walk out. You'll laugh over it. It won't bother you, or crush you unless you let it," I used to apply for work when I was a kid after I was already working just so I wouldn't get timid or afraid to go. Today I'll walk in any place. And if I'm civil and if I'm polite I expect them to be the same towards me. If they're not civil to me I won't be civil right back! I'll give them spade for spade and it doesn't worry or bother me one little bit. It's good to do this just for that reason alone.

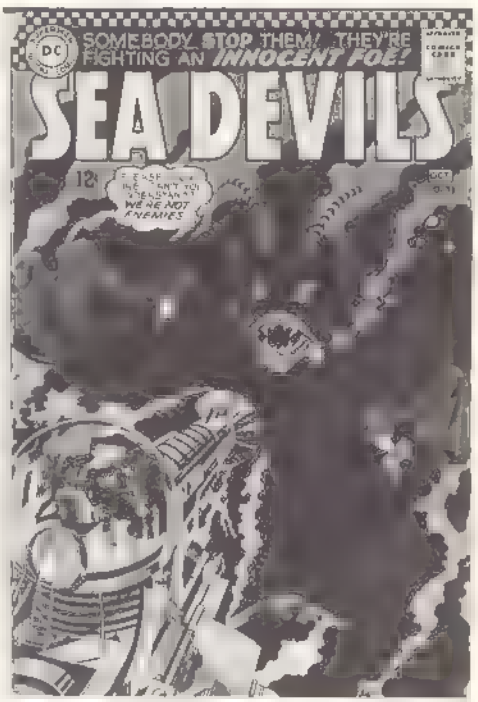
I'll tell you something; artists are notoriously poor business men. Many will let an agent do their work for them when they can find one. Especially during the early years you should do your own. YOU should get out on your own and look and learn about these places on your own. Later on when you're successful you can hire an agent to do your work for you and it's alright.

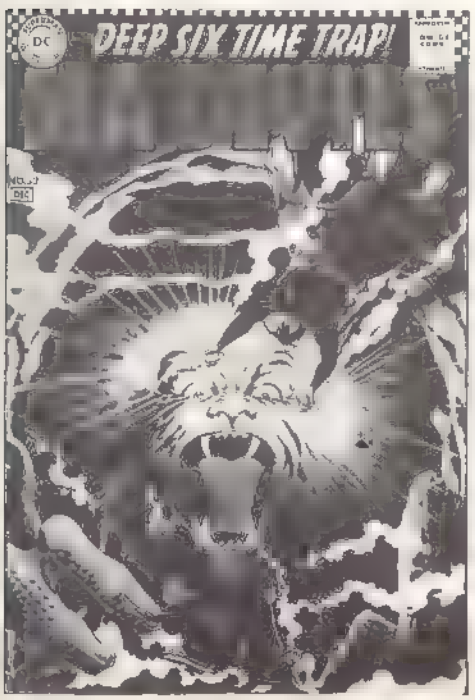
These are the years now, before you reach twenty, that you can develop like mad. And I'm confident, Joe, that by the time you're nineteen or twenty you'll be in this business. These are the important years. No one should waste them. So remember that and go for it. Really go for it and you'll get there.

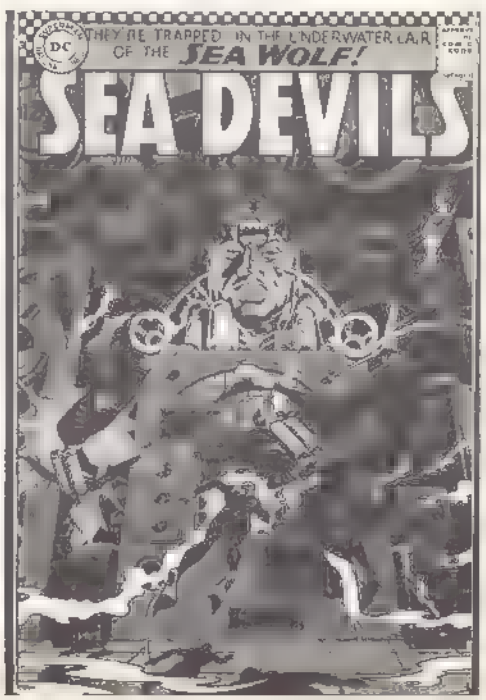
[Editor's Note: My sincere thanks to Joe Mosca and Howard Purcell for this fantastic feature! Joe conducted the interview, and also transcribed it from the tapes, saving me a tremendous amount of time! And my special thanks to Howard for all the fine material he furnished for the interview, and the illustrations he did especially for it!]

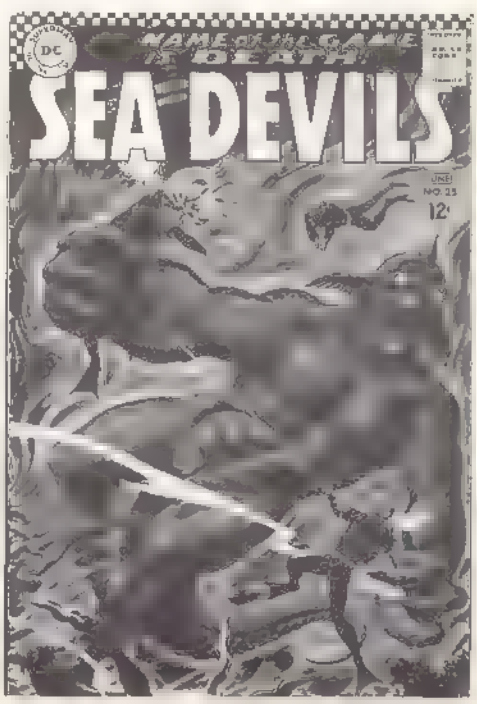












multicon 70

A report on the Oklahoma City Comicon

by JOHN ADKINS RICHARDSON

Being at that first auction was like watching a disaster in slow-motion. I was sitting next to John Novak, associate editor of *Collector's Den*. We have done a good deal of auctioneering --- he of rare coins and I of serious art --- and we were both aghast. Up in front a rather shaggy fellow was busy at work antagonizing three hundred potential buyers. He was very good at it. Of modestly superior wit and a certain course charm, his indifference to the demands of his role was staggering. He conveyed no sense of urgency. Things moved so slowly as to hardly move at all. Yet he cut off bidding with never so much as a "going . . . going . . . gone!" When a bid from the portly chap ahead of me was peremptorily rejected, that bidder (Jim Harmon of *The Great Radio Heroes* fame) reacted sharply. And his "Well f--k you!" called forth tremendous applause. For a time it looked as though OAF signified more than the acronym for Oklahoma Alliance of Fans, the sponsors of Multicon 70. But things improved with a substitute auctioneer and the appearance of Buster Crabbe, clearly the "star" of the convention.

Crabbe spoke extemporaneously for about an hour, very interestingly and easily, relying upon anecdotes about every phase of his life, from UCLA law student and Olympic swimming champion through the motion pictures and TV series to his current profession in the brokerage game. The latter, he said, "requires more agility than old 'Flash' ever needed to foil Ming." Now over sixty, Crabbe's Hawaiian genes have given him crisp black hair shot with silver strands, and his practice of swimming 1,000 yards a day has preserved the silhouette of youth. He was refreshingly candid about his career in movies, his motives, and his few personal vanities --- one of which is great pride in the accomplishments of his son. Obviously, he was gratified by the sort of adulation welling forth from the nostalgia buffs at the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City.

Both "Flash Gordon" and "Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars" were shown for the delectation of all "camp" followers and "B" movie fans. What I was looking forward to however, was "The Drums of Fu Manchu." As a child I was a prodigious reader and a great fan to Sax Rohmer. This particular serial had seized my attention and modified my sleeping dreams. Yet, I had never seen the concluding chapters! What had become of the fabled Scepter of Ghengis Khan? As it turned out, I still don't know. The episodes of this opus are unusually long and the print was old and dark. By Chapter Eleven the screen was blackness broken by spastic trails of white and occasional bursts of overexposure. At 2:35 a.m., my patience exhausted with my ocular nerves, I repaired to my room.

Of the motion pictures the most outstanding was a superb old thing called "The Freaks." For straightforward grotesqueness it cannot be matched. I had seen it once before, at one of those higher brow gatherings of conemaddicts who dote on Jean Luc Godard and can tell you the name of Max Reinhardt's script girl. The context of the Multicon --- where, if you tired of movies and comics, you could go listen to ancient radio serials -- enhanced the quality of the picture. The unusual thing about "The Freaks" is that its freaks were *real* freaks, that is, people of the sort displayed in circuses. The plot of the 1932 release concerns an opportunistic trapeze artist who marries a midget for his money, tries to poison him, and is punished for her intentions by the freak fraternity. Director Ted Browning took this rather banal script and turned it into something unique and touching by using authentic grotesques instead of make-up and professional actors. One gets reality where one expects delusion. That some of the unfortunates had genuine talent as cinema performers intensifies the pathos of the characters. One can scareely help but identify with their conditions. For which of us is not somehow deformed, within if not without? And who among us has not sometimes felt as set apart from others as sideshow attractions forever are?

Much of the time I felt that way at the Multicon. That it was held in Oklahoma City, where oil pumps chug on the capitol lawn and all the bars are "bottle clubs" did not improve my mood. Not only did I miss my ritualistic before dinner martini, I seemed caught within a miasma of isolation. Never a phone call. Not a single message. Even when calls had been promised. Upon leaving I discovered that the desk clerk had neglected to record my registration. The clerk would not take my money! But it also meant that the hotel had refused to accept phone calls or mail for me. The upshot of this was, of course that I seemed aloof from a number of people I'd have liked to meet. On the other hand, it was the least expensive convention I've ever attended.

Even those who were charged for rooms didn't seem to be spending *very* much money. There were a vast number of tables in the dealers room but most of the action consisted of people trying to sell and buy old comics with words and gestures instead of money. Nixon's deflationary policies were hitting this small market along with the big one where Buster Crabbe does acrobatics now. Everyone I spoke with was a bit concerned; a number said they'd not even made expenses. One consequence was that there were real bargains up for auction. But even so the bidding was slow and uneven. There were exceptions, of course. I sold a good number of originals of things previously published, some of the comic books went for record prices, and Don Newton sold five paintings within an hour after arriving at the hotel.

Too, I did manage to meet some of the people with whom I've been associated for the last two years. Gordon Love and Andy Warner were on hand, Andy with a Polaroid that was "holding out" on him, and G. B. pushing the latest S.F.C.A. publications. Both are extremely sweet guys. Their table was among the most attractive, due in large part to a prominently displayed oil of Flash Gordon by Don Newton. I was eager to meet Don because he is, in my by-no-means-humble opinion, one of the very few fan artists who has any merit as a draughtsman. He turned out to be a good-looking, dark haired fellow in his middle thirties, as graceful and unaffected as his comic style. Our likes and disaffections seemed pretty much to correspond. And each of us spent about a third of his time explaining to youngsters that drawing comic strips is not a reliable way to earn a living.

I bought very little at the Multicon, since comic books and pulps are anccillary to my research interests and I don't collect them. Still, the merchandise at one table proved irresistable. Most comic strips, including my own, are very retrograde in style and technique. But the work of at least two young men, named Rick Griffin and Victor Moscoso, seems to me to represent one way of the future. So I came home with my suitcase loaded with *Zap Comix* and things from Promethian Enterprises. So far as I know, Promethian's zine with the intricate logo that spells no name is the only one in fandom ever to take notice of Guido Crepax, the italian cartoonist. Now, I detest Rome almost as much as Oklahoma City; it's like the lower east side with monuments. But there's always a new, slickly printed paperback by Crepax in her bookstore. That fact, along with the Vatican Museum, the Forum, and the Borghese Gardens, is a redeeming feature of the "Eternal City." (Okay, l'amica, it's not Italy I'm down on, only Roma. Firenze is superb!)

Multicon 70 was the first fan gathering I had ever attended. What struck me most forcibly was the variety of types met together there. There were "straights" and street people; cycle jockeys, cowboys, and hard hats; a couple college professors and a lot of high school kids. There may have been one black person; I wasn't sure. (Certainly, one of the morbidities of the Black Experience must be the ubiquity of Teutonic superheroes). Nonetheless, in a world so polarized as ours, I was pleased to see the class-crossing popularity of fandom. It suggests, already, a far greater cohesiveness of the different levels of culture than one usually supposes. Such things are no longer of mere historic or comparative interest; they may have great significance for an age of increased social mobility and endless leisure.

On the way to the airfield the limousine driver had a few remarks to make about "them kooks in'erested in 'funny books.'" It was nothing to me. I sat there, watching side streets and dull praire flow by, seeded my lip cancer with an old briar, and got ahead on next year's leg dangling. By the time we touched down in St. Louis, I was well into March of 1971.

"THE WINDMILLS OF MY MIND"

by TONY ISABELLA

You want to know how to do a regular column without ever boring yourself or your readers? Don't ever do it the same way twice. I don't mean change format from issue to issue. Your format is important. It identifies your column, distinguishes it from all the columns in fanzines. Just don't do the same thing every time. My first column in issue # 10 was concerned mostly with past issues of this magazine. Last issue, I talked about some of my gripes. And this issue I'd like to explore the broad field of creativity, both in its own right, in the professional comics field, and, of course, in the fanzines. Let's go, troops!

CREATIVITY

My Webster's give creativity a simple definition -- creativity is the ability to create. Like most dictionary definitions, it is an oversimplification. The mere act of creating does not make the finished product a creation or the producer a creator. Everybody's not a creative person. If they were, there'd be no reason to have a great entertainment field that brings the masses books and magazines, movies and television, songs and music. And even these pro products are not always creative.

Confusing? Probably. You can't define creativity. You must tell people what you *think* creativity is. That's what makes you a critic. Everybody isn't a creative person, but everybody's a critic. You don't believe it? Everytime you switch off HEE HAW in disgust, you're a critic. Everytime you make that extra effort to watch ALL IN THE FAMILY, you're a critic. (One of the most fantastic things about the vast wasteland is that a show like the latter can follow two solid hours of sheer crap. See, I'm one of dem critic fellas, too).

You're a critic. I'm a critic.

I'll use my credentials as a critic to tell you that, for instance, 2001, A SPACE ODYSSEY (the book) says more and says it better than any of Truman Capote's books. I'll tell you that HAIR is so much bull shit and that it takes a rock masterpiece like Andrew Lloyd Webber's and Tim Rice's JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR to prove that the whole rock music scene has any value. You disagree? Why, I'm glad to hear it. That makes you a critic. And that is why I have been running off at the mouth for the past few paragraphs. I had to establish that.

You and I are critics. We can't define creativity. We stick to telling people when we think we see a creative product.

What I want to do in the rest of this column is take one critic's look at the creative product in the prozines and the fanzines. If you can stand the company, let's move out.

CREATIVITY IN COMICS

A few minutes ago, I sat down and composed a list of the most creative men in comics today. There are twelve names on that list. Warren writer T. Casey Brennan. Warren artist Ernie Colon. Steve Ditko. Charlton/D.C. editor, artist Dick Giordano. Gil Kane. Creator Jack Kirby. D.C. editor Joe Kubert. Marvel editor Stan Lee. Fine illustrator Gray Morrow. Marvel artist Barry Smith. The graphics showmaster Jim Steranko. Marvel scripter Roy Thomas. These names represent most of what's good in the comics field and the promises of what's to come. And I'll tell you why.

T. Casey Brennan, a little known writer for a very minor line of comic magazines. Yet Brennan has done two of the finest comic stories I've ever read. Both "Death of a Stranger" in CREEPY # 31, and "On The Wings of a Bird" in CREEPY # 38 show an amazing ability to examine human nature on a number of levels. The first examines death. The second examines imprisonment, which is worse. This is a writer to watch in the near future. "On The Wings of a Bird" is surely going to be on the final ballot of Don and Maggie Thompson's Goethe Awards. This is not speculation. They've been giving this writer regular reports on how the ballots are running. I hope the story receives the honor it so richly deserves.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: Not to brag, but remember when I suggested a simpler ballot for the Alley Awards? The Thompsons have been planning the Goethes for some time, but incorporated some of my awards suggestions. Look at their ballot. Short and sweet. Oh yes, "On The Wings of a Bird" got my vote for best story. Yours?)

Ernie Colon, Warren artist. Colon's been experimenting quite a bit with new storytelling techniques. Some of the stories he's illustrated are difficult to read as a result. But I can't berate him for that. Sometimes a story should be told in such a manner -- to force the reader to realize all of its subtleties. Colon isn't always successful with his experiments, but his having the graphic courage to attempt them surely rates him a place on my list.

Steve Ditko. What can be said about Steve Ditko? He is probably the comic books' first experimentor in using a comic story to promote his individual philosophy. He does it without using Denny O'Neil's overkill tactics. In Steve Ditko's stories, man is not the helpless creature he is in the Denny O'Neil stories. I think that Steve Ditko is wrong in many areas, but he does say that man has a choice. Take a look at "The 9th Life" in GHOSTLY TALES # 85. He's combined this philosophy with some of the most exciting artwork in comics. This story alone would rate him a place on my list.

Charlton/D.C. editor, artist Dick Giordano. Giordano has the talent of getting the best out of the people who work for him. He has tried more experiments in his titles than anyone else in comics. No matter what book he's been given to edit, be it super-hero, SF, war or romance, he's improved that book. He's got the most absolutely fantastic record in com-

ics. He has to be on the list.

Gil Kane. Gil Kane is another one of the comic book's finest craftsman and earliest experimentors. He examined human violence, human hatred in HIS NAME IS... SAVAGE! He examined national chauvinism in a CAPTAIN ACTION. The examples go on. Combining a strong sense of action, pacing, and angle shots with an introspective prying into human nature, Gil Kane is a creative master.

Creator Jack Kirby. No one else, perhaps, deserves to be put on this list as much as Jack Kirby does. Not only can Kirby boast of creating a string of the most popular characters in comics, but he can boast that he is still creating fantastic people. He seems to bring out the best in the people who work with him, too. Wherever he works, he becomes the creative center of that company. He deserves a place at the head of this list.

D.C. editor Joe Kubert. For all his artistic talent, the man's main fame lies in his editorial capabilities. In Tor, he shows us the birth of the nobility that should seperate man from the beasts. In Firehair, he traces intolerance through the ages. In GI COMBAT and the other D.C. war books, he tries to show that war is an often dehumanizing thing, notable only for the occasional heroism by one of the players. But even that heroism seems pointless. Kubert is most definitely on my list.

Marvel editor Stan Lee. If Jack Kirby's genuis is a continual spray of ideas, Stan Lee's takes another direction. He is able to think out his ideas and those of his staffers and give them the added dimension which sets the Marvel group apart from the others. Stan Lee improved many of Jack Kirby's Marvel creations, something I think is obvious. He's also shown his ability to tell epic-size stories competently. The Hulk's first 15-chapter battles with the Leader are a good example. Ditto Dr. Strange's search for the man called Eternity. And the first *thirty-five* issues of THE AVENGERS show his ability to fully develop characters. Stan Lee's possibly the major influence on my own writing, my spiritual father, to put it one way. You don't leave your father off your list of creative people, now do you?

Fine illustrator Gray Morrow. All of the artists on the list have something else to their credit besides their drawing. Morrow is on the list specifically for his drawing. His work for the ALL STAR WESTERN book, the romance books, the fantasy books show some very successful attempts to bring fine illustration techniques and styles to the four-color comic. This gets him on the list.

Marvel artist Barry Smith. Smith has the ability to say more with his artwork (witness the Conan series) than many of the established names in comics. This leaves the writer free to spin tales in which he can concentrate on embellishing with his words because the artist can fully present the plot with his drawings. Smith is possibly going to be the best artist in 1971, judging from the two CONAN issues that bear the 1971 date thus far.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: Before I get roasted for last issue's teaser that I would beg Barry Smith to illustrate a story for the CREEPER MAGAZINE, let me state here and now that I did not intend to do so without offering him pay for the story. At the time, I had a backer for the zine and a cheap printer. I was able to offer him only $20 a page, but I thought Barry might be willing to work for less than his Marvel rate if he liked the story. Unfortunately, the printer cut out and the backer followed. I never got around to even writing Barry about the project. Too bad. But if I ever get a chance at editting a national comic magazine, the first guy I contact got to be Barry Smith!)

The graphic showmaster Jim Steranko. That's what the guy is. He can do things with his artwork that no one else can. My fellow FF writers have already spent an issue talking about him; what can I add? Except that he's a nice guy. (Yeah, I know you a lot better than that, Jim, but you gotta keep up the front).

Marvel scripter Roy Thomas. Roy added class to the countless titles he's written. He embellishes the artists work much as his British collaborator embellishes the writer's work. When Roy does the dialogue or caption for a panel, he says everything that a guy could say about it. He's a comic book hack, but shows what sets a comic book hack away from other hacks. He's good most of the time.

Wasn't that disgusting?

I mean, after all that cool hostility I had going last issue, I just get through spending over a thousand words saying some nice things about twelve different people, I bet you're looking for me to really throw some brickbats when I discuss creativity in fandom, aren't you? Or maybe type the title and then leave the entire section blank? Don't count on it! I'm in a good mood.

CREATIVITY IN FANDOM

I tried to compile a list of creative fans similar to the one I made for the professionals. I couldn't do it. Because a lot of fandom's most important things came from SF fandom. So I'll just spend some more time being nice to people. Blaggh!

Jerry Bails stole quite a few ideas from SF fandom and added a few ideas of his

own. He deserves credit as do all the many fans who carried on his ideas. Fans like Roy Thomas, Glen Johnson, Don and Maggie Thompson, Dave Kaler, Fred Patten, and countless others. Not to mention fans like Gary Brown (COMIC COMMENTS) and Stan Blair (STAN'S WEEKLY EXPRESS) that took ideas of Jerry's and improved on them. By my reckoning, fandom's father gave is the Academy, CAPA-Alpha, the comics newszine, ALTER-EGO, the adzine, etc.

Of course, two pro editors deserve a lot of credit for bringing fans together. Fandom would have never been started if Julius Schwartz had not printed full addresses and would have never expanded had not Stan Lee continued the policy.

And who wants to try listing all the fan artists that have to be praised for making fanzines more colorful. Everybody has their own favorites. Some of mine are Alan Hanley, Wendy Fletcher, Dave Cockrum, Robert Kline, Bill Black, etc. All of them are creative people. Picture how dull all the writer's many words would be without pictures to relieve the monotony.

Phil Seuling deserves a pat on the back for his arranging the New York Convention for so many years. Ditto Gary Groth for allowing fandom a second choice as to which convention to attend. I'll try to make the Metro Con this year, Gary!

Speaking of Gary, I think the kid deserves a hand for all the work he's put into this publication. I think it's one of the five best fanzines around. It's a far cry from issue # 10 when I insulted him all over the place. Of course, he still groveis a lot, but now it's to people like Sal Buscema and Jim Steranko. Maybe he'll tell you how he got that tattoo that looks like Jim's footprints if you ask him.

Fan writers. We've got some good people there. Mark Evanier can do an opinion column like no one else can. Dwight Decker's adventures of fan fiction are faanish classics. Carl Gafford is one of fandom's finest writers and has done some remarkably mature and entertaining stories. As has Gordon Matthews.

As long as I'm being nice to everybody, I'll give Wally Wood, founder of WITZEND, a big hand. He was the first pro to jump into the fan publishing scene. He inspired Jim Steranko, Berni Wrightson, and Gray Morrow, heroes all.

Two more good folks. Marty Greim, publisher of the COMIC CRUSADER, does convention coverage that puts all other coverage, mein own included, into the shade. And Tom Long has presented the best work of several fans in GRAPHIC SHOWCASE. Berni Wrightson did not top his great "Uncle Bill's Barrel" from that zine until that King Kull story recently.

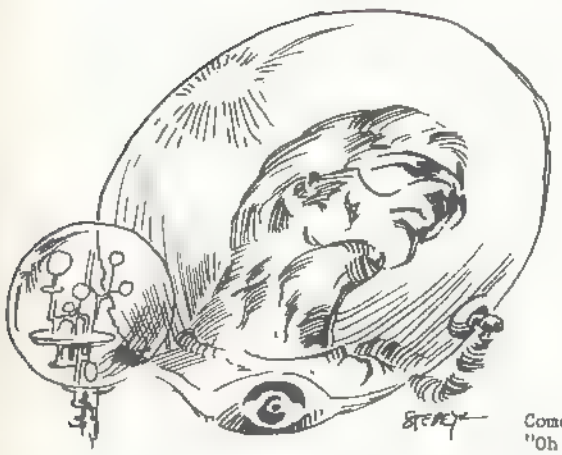
All of which is a heck of a lot of space to take to say something I could have said in two sentences. I love the comics field. I love fandom. No doubt I've reduced you all to tears with such a tender set of sentences.

Knock off that laughing, you stupid fans!

Nope. Doesn't have it. I'm just in too good a mood today, I guess. Send them cards and letters to 11203 Peony Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44111. I'll be waiting.

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: Honest, Gary! I'll get into a bad mood next issue! I promise!)

HOW CREATION WAS CREATED



BY GORDON MATTHEWS

In the beginning there was a great big NOTHING. Yeah, there was just this big fat nothing stretching all over nowhere. And things were pretty well off.

Then one day (except there weren't exactly "days") Ghud the first god created himself (because gods can do weird things like that). Well, when Ghud saw that he'd created himself into just a big pile of nothing, he wasn't too happy because that was an insinuation that he was nothing too. So, Ghud decided to create creation. Things were starting to get worse.

He hadn't gone far in his task of creating when he discovered that it was a lot more work than he'd bargained on. Ghud said "This is a pain in the ass." And thereupon Ghud decided to create a bunch of lesser flunky gods to take care of creating things. This he did and they did.

After the flunky gods had finished creating the heavens and the earth and all that stuff, they decided that it was a pretty raunchy deal being at the bottom of intelligent creation. So they created a bunch of flunky animals below them which they called Man. But Man wasn't too happy about being on the bottom of the totem pole either, so they created a bunch of lesser animals. This sort of pissed the lesser gods off because they felt Man was getting too uppity and highfalutin', so they took away Man's creating privileges.

I. HOW THE ASS WAS CREATED

One day Ghud was messing around and smoking a new brand of cigarette he was busily creating when he heard his wife hollar "Hey Henry, the sink's leaking again! Come 'n fix it, willya'?" And Ghud said "Oh crap, this is a drag," and he went off to fix the sink and left the cigarette butt lying on his chair. When he came back, he forgot about it and sat on it. And his wife said "Hey Henry, you dummy, you're sitting on your butt!" That gave Ghud an idea, and so he gave everyone a butt to sit on.

II. HOW SEX WAS CREATED

One day Ghud was lying around the house with nothing to do and his wife was feeling bored, and there was no means of entertainment because X-rated pictures, hadn't been created yet. And so Ghud created sex.

III. HOW FIRE WAS CREATED

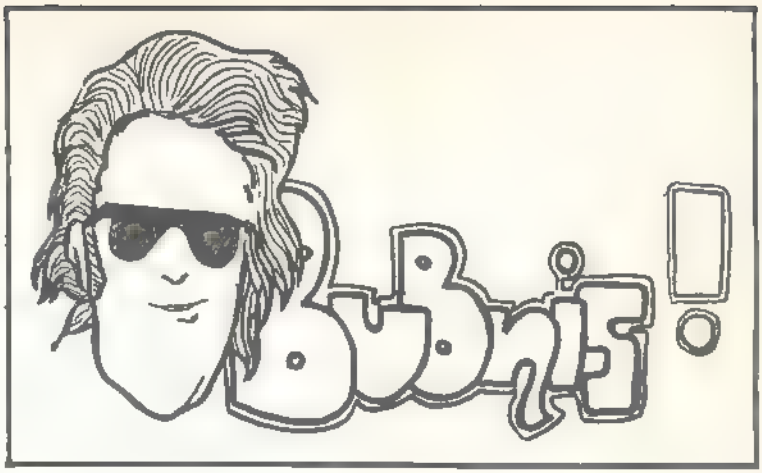
One day a man discovered sex, and so he went around spreading his discovery with all the women. This ticked off Ghud no end, because he felt that sex should be a privilege limited only to gods. So he threw a thunderbolt at this man and it burned him up. But it was to late, because Man had already discovered sex, and now he had fire too. Ghud counted to ten and went off to throw thunderbolts at dinosaurs.

IV. HOW GOOD AND EVIL WERE CREATED

As he grew older, Ghud started to formulate a philosophy, as youngsters tend to do around that part of their lives. And when he had thought the matter out well, Ghud said "Henceforth, anything that I like is Good, and anything I don't like is Evil." And so it was.

By this time things were really getting terrible. . .

A Piece of Bread, a Cup of Wine & my Comic Books



by Bernie Bubnis

A series of articles about fandom by a pro!

Wow, those dealer folks are gettin' uppitty. I can remember when prices were low enough to get a collection going. Okay, gang, a little trip through history:

Comicollector # 14 (Febuary 1964) page 10: an ad from Lee Whittlesey for a copy of *All Star # 11* in mint condition for $10! Okay, get those cards and letters into 'ol Lee -- perhaps he hasn't sold out yet!

Speaking of bargains brings to mind a visit with Joe Simon (of Jack Kirby fame). It was about four years ago and we were just throwing the bull for an article in my old 'zine, *Comic Heroes Revisited*. He produced a full book of original art by himself and Kirby of the last *Fighting American* saga that never got printed. "My God," I said with a hint of enthusiasm in my voice, "give me that stuff or I'll kill your entire family!" He deduced the art was worth a little something and put it back with the rest of his treasures, he made the comment then, that it might wind up in magazine form someday, but I think he was just trying to get me off the subject.

(I hadn't planned this to become a rambling type article, but goodness, that's exactly what is shaping up in front of me. Tune into the last paragraph and see what has developed).

I remember meeting Jim Steranko for the first time at an early New York Comic Convention. He was only a dealer in those days and took me over the coals for six copies of *All Star*. We met again the following year, but he was starting to branch out -- into prodom.

"Bubs," he says to me while I slip a few copies of *Spy Smasher* from Phil Seuling's table, "I'm going to see Joe Simon today and ask him for a job."

[Scene change]: "Bubs, I didn't get the job -- guess I'll try Stan Lee."

"Hey, babes, take it from the Bubs --- you don't have a chance in this business. You're successful in commercial art -- stay there.'

Needless to say a lot of new artists were lookin' for me to put down their art after this bit. Truthfully, I had no idea the talent I was talking to -- Stan Lee foresaw the wonder, Jim's early work was a little crude except for a fabulous splash page for a character he created to show off his style. I think he gave it to another Long Island fan, Len Wein (sometimes a pro writer for D.C. and Marvel in the horror line) and it stays to this day my very favorite Steranko work.

New York fans of old made it part of their weekly schedules to drop by to visit Julie Schwartz, the meanest man since Black Pete.

"You kids get out of my office or I'll throw you all out the window!"

"Aw, come on Mr. Schwartz, you don't have a window in your office."

There was only one fan even Schwartz couldn't cope with -- the infamous Ronn Fradkin. Frad would have his close friend Joe Giella call Julie out of his office and then Ronn would run into his office and sit behind the desk. Schwartz would return to find Fradkin reading Marvel Comics.

"Fradkin, get out of my office before I kill you!"

During the once frantic "get Hawkman his own comic" crusade (one of fandom's first causes) Ronn brought in a wild crow and set it loose in Schwartz's office. He screamed through a bull horn "Tweet tweet — give Hawkman his own birdseed!"

"Fradkin, get out of my office!"

Sid Greene always drew Julie into a story he was involved in pencilling. Once Ronn got him to draw Schwartz as an alien creature and made such a big stink about it, Julie even mentioned it in print. "Funny, you don't look Martian."

"Fradkin, please get out of my office and I'll give you a job as my assistant editor." (Ronn took the job and has never been heard from since. Foul play at comic book National?)

(Gee, can this clown ramble on? Well, let's see if he can tie the whole mess together with his last paragraph.)

Okay, the article is finished.

FANTASTIC FANLETTERS

BILL CANTEY
809 Stonefield Avenue
Charleston, S.C. 29407

Many of the FANTASTIC FANZINE's readers may not be able to detect all the clues to the identity of the unnamed hero in "The Golden Vest." The silver-handled Colts in the psuedo Kid Colt story were not a product of my imagination, but of recollection. I remember a Kid Colt of about twenty years ago. He wore the often mentioned Colts, slung from two seperate gunbelts. The Kid Colt I recall, was leaner, meaner; and strangely enough, older. Since there was no Comics Code Authority, the stories were vastly more satisfying. The artwork was reminiscence of John Severin's excellent style, but the identity of the artist is unknown by me.

I believe that the current crop of Marvel super hero magazines surpasses the old time efforts. But, the westerns are badly hampered by censorship, and are pretty dull by comparison to western mags from the late forties and early fifties. The present Kid Colt is a mere shadow of his former personality. The Rawhide Kid is a reflection of that shadow. The Two-Gun Kid is also a name from the pre-Coded past, and there the resemblances ends. The present Two-Gun is more like another pre-Code character, The Black Diamond. Black Diamond was also a masked lawman with a powerful cohort, Bumper by name. I don't object to an editor dusting off and revamping an old idea; as long as it's an improvement. Marvel's westerns are *not* an improvement. Larry Lieber has made some valiant efforts, and I'd love to see what he might do unimpeded. Restricted talent is a crime against human nature.

I doubt if the old westerns will ever be reprinted. Comic fan purists seem to scorn them along with teen and love magazines. Marvel has the men and the means to produce gutsy, realistic westerns. National's Bat Lash broke some of the taboos of this era; but he never came close to the original Kid Colt, the best of the West. Will he ever *really* be back? One can only hope.

CHARLES D. SCHRECK
El Paso, Illinois 61738

Received FANTASTIC FANZINE 12 and am again impressed at your product. The art throughout --- Kline, Newton, Cockrum (where, by the way, has he gone pro?), Hickman, Cornell, Richardson, Pinkoski, (not my favorite fan artist, but nonetheless talented) --- was great. Manley's strip was especially interesting to me, due to my interest in Steranko. It is this kind of exploiter of original art that makes it so hard to obtain from the artist or the publisher. There is no way to do away with this type of money-grubber, but it is still discouraging to see even a small sketch by a pro go for a fortune. And it is even more discouraging that people will pay that kind of price.

Tony Isabella's column was interesting as his usually are. His comments on the Alley Awards overlooked an important point. The Alley's originated when *all* the good comic art appeared in the pro magazines. Fan strips couldn't compare with Infantino and Fox. Therefore pro strips and fan strips competed seperately. But now, many fan strips are equal to and more intelligent and better done than pro strips. Yet whoever does the Alleys keeps trying to make the two -- pro and fan -- compete on a seperate basis. This is why the Alleys have lost respect as an accurate competition for the best in comic art. To be really worthwhile, the Alleys would have to let fan strips compete with pro strips, on an equal basis. Spicer's Graphic Story Poll and the Thompson's Goethe Awards have done this -- and are truly representative of the best in comic art.

The Syd Shores interview is not the first two-part interview in fandom. Mike Barrier's FUNNYWORLD 12 carried the first part of an interview with Bob Clampett (Beany & Ceacil, Warner Brothers); FW 13 will carry the second. There are probably other examples, too. It was a nice interview with Shores, though.

The price tag is a bit hard to swallow at first. Ghad, it seems like every 'zine is raising its price. But, if you can come up with a 'zine of the quality of FF 12 every time, and if it only comes out a couple of times a year, I can accept it. If it would help lower your costs, I could accept a two-color cover. Very creative things can be done with two colors.

[Dave has had two strips published in CREEPY and VAMPIRELLA. And, by the time this sees print, a story he has both written and drawn may have seen print in one of the Warren publications. Last issue I "promised" not to have any more color covers for awhile, due to the extra high cost involved. However, because of several unusual circumstances, this issue's color cover cost me only $90 more than a 2 color cover would have cost. I couldn't pass that up. Next issue's cover will be black & white, which will help defray costs -GGG].

ROGER ALAN BURRIS
1019 West Calhoun
Springfield, Illinois 62702

To be quite honest I did not intend to order FANTASTIC FANZINE # 13. The big reason (besides the fact that it is a very good fanzine) I am ordering it now is because with FANTASTIC FANZINE 12, you included some advertising for SUPERGRAPHICS. I suddenly realized that if I hadn't ordered and received FF 12, I never would have known about PORTFOLIO ONE, and O'RYANN. As it were, I ordered them both, and would have been very angry if I had found out about them after they were sold out.

[?? -GGG].

ROBERT E. CITKOWSKI
P.O. Box 122
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

I recently received FF # 12 and what can I say? This definitely is your best issue to date and I said that about last issue. It's really pleasing to see that you don't just rest on your laurels, but keep striving for greater heights. More power to you!

The Kline cover was the highlight of the issue and really liked the page layout of the Kline interview. Why not try the three column layout more frequently.

Seeing as how this issue put you in the hole financially, no doubt because of the slick cover, while you're waiting for your books to balance, why not ask Steranko to do one of his paintings for your next slick cover?

[Next issue, I'd like to alternate between two and three column layout. There is a chance that a future issue of FF will sport a cover painting by Steranko - GGG].

ALAN HANLEY
1055 West Granville Apt 608
Chicago, Illinois 60626

Fantastic job! Some of the material in FF 12 was not outstanding but because of the put-together job and overall quality of the product, it all looked great! FF and GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE are the best now - although I'm not sure if GSM is of and for fans, still. FF still is by, for, and of fans I'm happy to say.

Your cover was the best SF illustration I've seen on any 'zine in a year. I like Kline's color work even better than his black & whites. More than anything, I like his imagination. As an artist, he looks very well accomplished, but his imagination looks fantastically promising. Guys like him need fandom to keep producing. He should be painting his own covers for magazines and pocketbooks, and getting wealthy doing it.

Cockrum's art is solid craftmanship - like Murphy Anderson's. Same is true, I think, of Black. Richardson is obviously a great illustrator. Bad as my Captain Marvel picture was and as basic as the Bummer strip was, I think their chief asset to FF 12 was alternative comic style. A little variety from all the excellent top heavy illustrations in FF 12.

Very entertaining, well-written and easy reading. Thanks, Jim Wilson.

Sorry, Dwight, I just don't have the time to doubt Captain America's stalwartness, devotion and purpose in fighting for universal American political values. It's all I can do to keep my eyes on Chicago and Illinois politicians.

The neatest thing about Steranko's (Strenko's) HISTORY OF COMICS was I felt so satisfied at getting an honest-to-goodness bona-fide bargain.

MARK SKIBICKI
5946 Sheridan Drive
Williamsville, N.Y. 14221

I must comment on FF # 12. It's fairly difficult for me to appraise a fanzine on the basis of comparison to other 'zines, since I'm relatively new to fandom and fanzines; but drawing on my limited exposure, FF 12 was one of the top three fanzines I've ever seen.

Textwise, the high points of the ish were the Kline interview, Dave Transue's "The Second Golden Age" and the Fantastic Fanletters section. Honorable Mentions go to the Syd Shores interview and Bubnis' Fanzine Fandom article. For some reason, the interview with Bob Kline caught my fancy much more than the one with Dwight Decker. From what I've read by Decker, it seems he's a bit too wordy in places (as are most fan writers, in my opinion) and this carried over into his answers to the questions. The two-part interview with Syd Shores seemed to hold more information than Decker's five pager. However, lest Mr. Decker feel persecuted, I will say I think he did a very nice job reviewing Steranko's HISTORY OF COMICS.

About the art in your 'zine - what can I say? You obviously have more of the top artists in fandom per ish than any other 'zine I've seen. Furthermore, the artists seem to do better work for you than for anyone else. The Hawkman illo by Newton was easily the best art of his I've ever seen, and the centerspread by Fantucchio - WOW! Don't let my raves go to your head, though; you did include a couple illos which I thought were rather poor in comparison with the rest of the mag's art. The illo by O'Neal, the Rice Captain America on page 30, and Jay Mike's pic on page 36 fall into this category. I'm not knocking these artists (with the possible exception of O'Neal), but I do think those illos should have been screened out of the book. Before I forget the cover - again, what is there to say? The glossy stock and beautiful color reproduction of Kline's fantastic painting made up without exception the best looking, most attractive fanzine cover I've seen. Too bad you can't afford to do all your covers this way.

JIM WILSON
942 Juniper Street N.E. # B2
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

After reading FF 12 through, what can I say? I was -- quite simply -- overwhelmed. I could go on for a page just gosh-wowing about the 'zine, but I'll leave that to everyone else this time, and try to comment on the issue itself.

The cover was beautiful. Period. The "living color," when combined with an already fantastic Kline painting, made FF 12 look completely professional! Inside, the appearance and layout was kept at this high standard; I doubt if a professional magazine art director could have handled the appearance of the 'zine better! The art was much better this ish than last, if you can believe that. John Richardson's and Don Newton's art was a welcome addition to FF and gives you THE best art staff around. The only art I didn't like was that of Doug Hazlewood and Mike O'Neal. As I've said before, they're just not in the same class; you've gotta' admit that.

The interview with Bob Kline was very interesting and informative; keep 'em coming. Tell me -- was it Jan Strnad who wrote that article on Bob's gafiation? It seemed to me that Jan's writing style was the closest to that used in the article.

I can't, of course, comment on the quality of my story, except to say to the readers that it was the first in a series and that future ones will be of much higher quality.

I only want to say one thing about Transue's article. His opinions are his own and he is entitled to them. I personally think he's all wet. If the writing in comics is so bad, Dave, then how come a paperback publisher is releasing the first six issues of GREEN LANTERN in paperback form? Because of the *literate writing* therein? One thing I do have to agree with Dave on though; his opinion that THE TWILIGHT ZONE was the best horror comic since the E.C.'s of old. The stuff that mag put out in the early sixties was much, much better than anything put out by D.C. or Marvel. I think the book is still being published in reprint form.

Bernie Bubnis' article was interesting to those who want to know more about the origins and "early days" of comic fandom.

John's centerspread was *very* well done. The use of colored ink on the spread improved its appearance immensely.

The interview with Doc D was interesting. It presented insight into one of fandom's most interesting and complex personalities. Dwight, what do you think of Kirby's new books? You mentioned that the freewheeling style prevalent in the Golden Age comics was missing from today's books. I myself think that Kirby has done a magnificent job of combining that certain GA flair with the complexities of today's comic stories. Jack, on the strength of his Jimmy Olsen series and the first issues of the other books he's doing, has my Alley vote hands down; no questions asked. I agree with Dwight about today's fanzines. The new artzines are nice, but I want a little more than good art when I buy a fanzine. Certain 'zine eds of certain artzines could take a lesson from ANOMALY and FANTASTIC FANZINE. Look at 50% of today's ads for fanzines: Art by Robert Kline, Steve Hickman, Mike Kaluta, Berni Wrightson, Don Newton, Frazetta, Jeff Jones... ad nauseum. And the article content of said 'zines is often worse than that of the rawest comic crudzines of the mid 60's fandom. I have nothing against a *few* 'zines like that, to encourage variety, but *all* of them?

"The Sword of Eternal Strength" by David Anthony Kraft was one of the best pieces of text S&S I've seen in a fanzine. It wasn't too long (the one thing which keeps down quality of most fan attempts at S&S -- the writers milk their ideas dry in order to make their stories as long as possible, resulting in a rather "padded" style). David Kraft doesn't follow this route, however. He says more in 500 words than most lesser writers could say in twice the space. Good job, David!

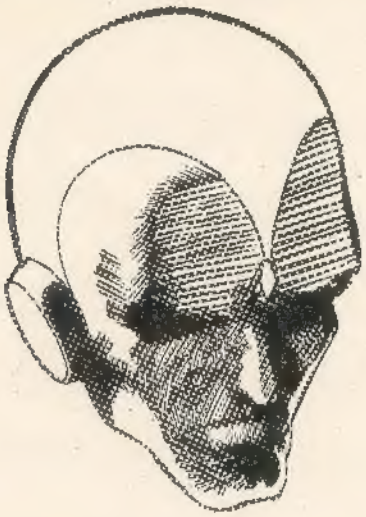
The strips were a welcome change-of-pace. "Breeding Reserve" was very well done and had a *very* interesting graphic design, with the reversed images and all. "The Bummer" was so true it wasn't even funny.

[I think that this issue's standard of art has gone one notch above last issues. Jan Strnad DID NOT write the Gafiation fiction. And for right now, the writer will have to remain a secret. Using a colored ink in the centerspread was John's idea, which just goes to prove, once again, John is a real graphic genius; and I don't use that word lightly! - Gary]

MIKE
ROBERTS
70

DAVE COCKRUM
CONAN

FF - WRAP UP



Since each issue takes so long to be printed (usually about one month), I thought it best to include a flyer announcing special publications, giving plugs, et cetera.

FAN CAL '72 is out! It is 5 11" x 17" sheets, printed on white paper, with some excellent professional artwork adorning and decorating the days and months of the year! It is available, mailed in a durable mailing tube from Byron Preiss, 3104 Glenwood Road, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230. The calendar features artwork by John Romita, Richard Buckler, Kenneth Smith, Joe Kubert, and more. Only $1.50 + 25¢ postage.

THE COLLECTOR is put out quarterly by Bill G. Wilson [1535 Oneida Drive, Clairton, Pa. 15025] and is a highly enjoyable art & article 'zine. Issues 23 and 24 are only 35¢ each. Issue 24, out in August will contain a four-color cover of Superman by Don Newton and Dan Adkins; a report on the N.Y. Con by Bill and Tom Fagan, and more. Also, Bill is putting out PANORAMA, a special artzine. He'll unleash it at the N.Y. Con, and if it goes over well, will reprint it for fandom distribution. Watch for it!

If Sword & Sorcery is your forte', then you shouldn't miss OMNIFAN. Published by David Anthony Kraft (who wrote that sensational S&S story, "The Sword Of Eternal Strength" last issue) it contains text fiction, articles and artwork, and material concerning past authors. Only 50¢ per issue from David: St. Michael, North Dakota 58370. Issues 4 & 5 are available.

The above 'zines are recommended by me, worth any fan's money. FAN CAL '72 is recommended more to the real art fans, since it is actually only 10 regular size pages long.

DEALERS: Special dealer prices for issues of FF still available are:

FF 11 [10 or more copies]: 75¢ each.
FF 12 [10 or more copies]: $1.00 each.
FF 13 [10 or more copies]: $1.00 each.

Last issue, there was an editorial error concerning cost of subscriptions. The indentia stated, 3 issues for $3.00, while I said 4 issues for $3.00. Sorry, but the indentia is correct. At $1.00 for an advance order, FF is one of the lowest cost fanzines for the number of pages, quality of material, etc. To lower subscription rates to $3.00 for 4 issues would surely doom FF.

My sincere apologies to John Fantucchio, Kenneth Smith, Vincent Marchesano, Don Newton, and Howard Purcell for the poor printing of their works. I had, again, changed printers with this issue because of the fact that last issues' printer was located 80 miles away, which made it difficult to do business with him. This issue doesn't quite meet past issue's printing standards, and I, personally, am a little disappointed in the job. John's stunning cover was run by a different printer than the one who ran the inside. [I had given the original printer all the work, including the cover, but he couldn't meet the deadline and therefore had to subcontract out to have the cover done). And as you can see, it's one of, if not John's BEST piece of work! Much of John's fine-line halftone work inside, unfortunately came out too dark; Kenneth Smith's logo to "The Golden Vest" clogged up terribly (and that being Kenneth's first piece of work for FF, I'm particularly disturbed about that); the zipatone used on Lorna Dane [page 49], though admittedly fine, should have reproduced perfectly, instead clogged up. Ditto the zipatone used on Don Newton's full page drawing accompanying "The Golden Vest". And lastly, Howard Purcell's renderings on pages 34 and 35 were NOT supposed to bleed off the page. There were numerous minor flaws, but these are the most important. [All of John's work reproduced here will be on exhibition at the METRO CON, so if you're coming - you can see it in it's true beauty!] Next issue I will be using one of the largest printing firms in Washington and guarentee a flawless job. Again, apologies to the above artists and to my readers for a print job that isn't up to par with our usual printing standard.

C.C.A. REPORT

Duffy Vohland

Well, as most of you have probably heard, the Comics Code was revised on January 28 of this year, and I think again sometime in late April or early May.

In case you haven't heard them, here's a list of the revisions that were made (at the time of this writing, May 11, I'm not completely sure about the first, most-recent made change. The others were made on the 28th and are taken from a newspaper article):

1. Written guidelines on the use of narcotics in stories have replaced the unwritten understanding that drugs would not be mentioned at all in comic books.

2. Restrictions on showing corruption among public officials as long as it is portrayed as exceptional and the culprit is punished have been deleted.

3. Restrictions on sympathetic depiction of crimminal behavior has been deleted.

4. Restrictions on law-enforcement officers dying as a result of crimminal activity as long as the guilty are brought to justice have been deleted.

5. Requirements that "all characters be depicted in dress reasonably acceptable to society" have been deleted.

6. Implied permission to suggest, but not portray seduction has been added.

7. Implied permission to deal with Vampires, ghouls, werewolves, etc. in the classic tradition has been added.

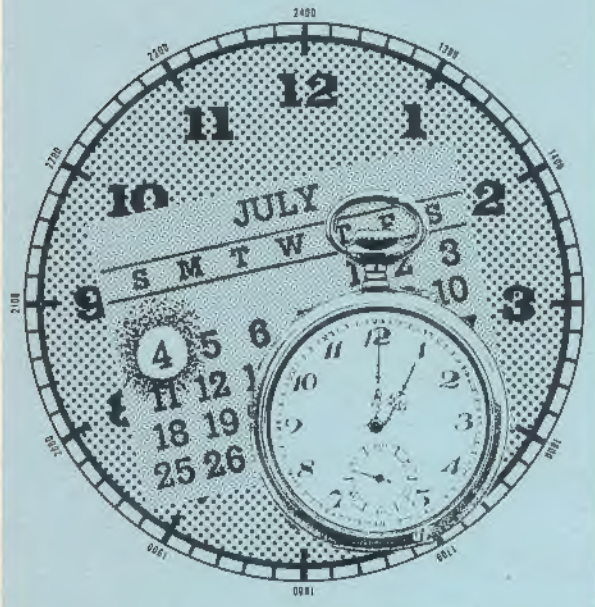
Also, restrictions on the showing of blood, the use of stronger language and other areas have been lessened considerably.

Now that you've heard all of the changes, I want to ask you all a very important question. What should happen to this Revisal Campaign? Should we continue fighting for further changes in the Code? Or should the remaining money in the Campaign Committee be disbanded, everyone call it quits, and just be satisfied with the revisions that *were* made? Or do you have some suggestions as to what we might do? This is a big decision and the future of this Campaign rests on all of your shoulders, so please, everyone write and tell me what you think should be done.

Gary asked me to keep this as short as possible, so I'll finish now. Remember this though: it's up to you as to whether this Campaign continues or not, so write and voice your opinions!

DUFFY VOHLAND
P.O. Box 70 Clarksburg, Indiana 47225

FANTASTIC FANZINE 13



THE COVER STORY

DESIGNER and AUTHOR
JOHN G. FANTUCCHIO

It's the 1300th hour - Sunday, July 4, 1971. The great city of New York is celebrating our nation's Independence Day. At the reknowned Statler Hilton the convention of comic collectors is in its third day. Collectors from many nations have convened at this designated site. A multitude of hard-core collectors are chattering about their favorite pulp-paper superhero, while in the adjoining banquet hall a number of them are seated listening, awe-inspired, to the very creators of these four-color heroes. Unbeknowest to these comic connoisseurs, shades of peril beckon as high above the city a battle of untold ferocity is about to commence. Two titanic and opposing forces are about to wage combat and scar the countenance of the majestic metropolis!